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epic ILLUSTRATED

this issue:
JOHN BYRNE
TERRY AUSTIN
DAVE SIM
MARK WHEATLEY
TIM CONRAD
and
EDWARD BRYANT

cover story
TO BE A CHAMPION

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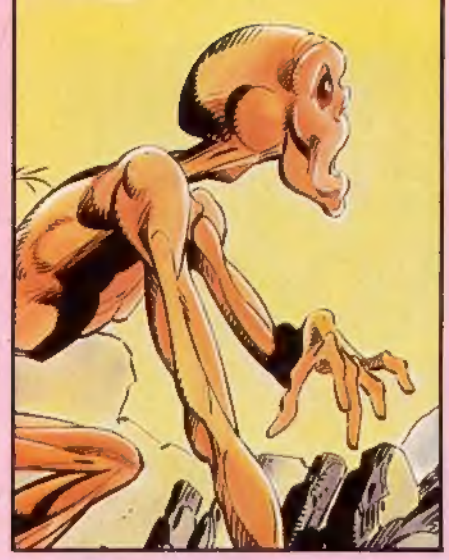

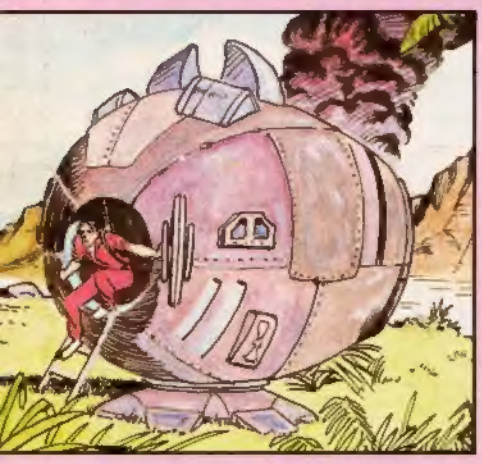

epic ILLUSTRATED™

OCTOBER 1985 VOL. 1, No. 32

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artwork © 1985 Jerry Bingham

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OVERVIEW

notes on stories & contributors

COVER STORY

Last year about this time, while attending a **Creation Convention,** we looked at the portfolios of two students about to graduate from the **Kubert School of Cartooning,** which has provided a steady flow of new talent into comics of late. Many of their graduates have become contributors to **Epic Illustrated** or our **Epic Comics** line. **Steve Bissette, Rick Veitch,** and **Tom Yeates** are a few that come to mind. The young men showing us their work were **James Geldhoff** and **Eric Shanower.** We thought both showed promise, but felt that Geldhoff was closer at the time to having a fully developed style and sense of imagery that suited **Epic** (Shanower has since entered the field too; he is currently inking **Nexus** for **First Comics**) and decided to try him on a story.

One of the things you try to do in working with a new artist is to play to their strengths. Among the impressive recurring images throughout Geldhoff's portfolio was his vision of futuristic women warriors, many armed with prosthetic-like weapons. With those kind of visuals in mind, we devised the story that appears in this issue, **To Be a Champion** (Actually, it was originally just plain **Champion,** until we discovered recently to our embarrassment that we already had a story with that exact title in our inventory. You'll be seeing it next issue). Working in the technique of using gray paper to establish his middle tone then adding lights and darks as needed, James completed the story without a hitch, more than matching up to our expectations. We placed his job in our abundant inventory, waiting for the right opening in the schedule to run it.

Shortly after the beginning of the year, illustrator **Jerry Bingham,** contributor to **Heavy Metal** and creator of the First Comics' graphic novel, **Beowulf,** dropped by to show us a painting he was completing to see if we might be interested in using it as a cover. We started to explain to him how close to our limit on covers we already were, when we got a good look at what he had done. The lady who graced Jerry's painting could have stepped right out of James Geldhoff's **To Be a Champion** story. One of the requests we most often get is that more of our covers should have accompanying stories. Suddenly, Jerry was presenting us with an accompanying *cover* for a story that he didn't even know existed. A coincidence like that you don't let pass. And this issue, here they are. Cover *and* story.

PREDATORS

We've run adaptations of stories by a number of established fantasy and science-fiction authors, such as **Harlan Ellison, Michael Moorcock,** and **Roger Zelazny.** As a general rule, the authors—tied to their own writing schedules and commitments—don't do the actual adapting of their own prose into comics form, but are content to have a writer or artist with comics experience whom they trust handle the task. **Edward Bryant**—probably best known for his **Cinnabar** series, a collection of linked short stories—decided to try turning his **Predators** into the illustrated format himself. He enlisted the help and advice of **Leanne Harper,** editor of **Mile High Futures,** a trade publication for comics and s-f collectors to which Ed contributes book reviews, and he recruited his own artist, **Carol Kimball.** Carol maintains her own studio, **Calliope Studios,** and does children's book illustrations and film storyboards. The end result of the collaboration is a refreshing break with what might be considered a more traditional comics approach. The pace of the story is far more deliberate, allowing characterization and

mood to deepen and become more chilling. The art, deceptively simple, conveys an open sketchbook naturalness with an undercurrent of the otherworldly. Comics are usually fast, elaborate movement; **Predators** demonstrates they can be something less. And more.

IN MEMORIAM

The last few months have been sad ones for all of us on staff here. Death has taken two of our Marvel friends and co-workers and claimed an Epic contributor and longtime mainstay of science-fiction illustration. We wanted to note their passing.

Danny Crespi and Morrie Kuramoto

If you are familiar at all with the people who produce comic books, chances are it's only the ones who are listed in the credits. The artists, the writers, the letterers and colorists, and the editors; those who are directly involved in producing the stories. But a lot more people are needed to get the comics we do out to the folks who want to read them. **Danny Crespi** and **Morrie Kuramoto** were two of those people. Danny was Marvel's production supervisor. Morrie did the production work on all the letter columns and Bullpen Bulletins. Both of them started working for Marvel back in the Fifties, maybe earlier in Morrie's case, before it was even called Marvel. So they were fixtures in the place. Anchors. If you were away for a few months or a few years and then strolled back into the Marvel Bullpen, you knew, no matter what else had changed, you'd still see Danny and Morrie. But that isn't all of it. Fireplugs are fixtures too; we're glad they're there but we don't feel great emotional attachment. Danny was a warm, lovable guy. Morrie was a curmudgeon. They were old buddies and bickered as only old buddies and long-married couples can. You could feel the affection in the fussing and gibing. And you could join in. There was no better audience for insult comedy, bullpen style, than Danny. And if you caught him just right, even Morrie might stop haranguing and actually smile. They might be fixtures, but they included you in. And made you feel they enjoyed having you there. You might have family at home or you might not, but somehow, with Danny and Morrie around, you had family at Marvel, too. That's a hard thing to lose. But lots of people, lots of places, never have *anything* like it at all. Thanks, Danny. Thanks, Morrie.

Leo Summers

When artist and science-fiction illustrator, **Leo Summers** died this year, a little history disappeared with him. Though he had done everything in the commercial art field from comic books to movie posters, Leo was best known for his contributions to the science-fiction magazines, notably **Analog**, and he was also one of a slowly dwindling few to have entered the field while the pulps still survived. As art director for **Fantastic** and **Amazing** it was Leo's job to redesign them into today's slicker digest format. He went on to handle many large advertising and book illustration assignments but always would fit in jobs for the s-f magazines for the freedom they afforded him. In the mid-seventies, Leo contributed a number of art jobs to Warren Publishing's **Creepy, Eerie,** and **Vampirella** black-and-white comics, where his mastery of pen and wash technique won new fans. He also did graphic story material for the **Atlas** line and **DC Comics.** His last comic story—not yet printed—completed not long before brain cancer made him too ill to work, was for **Epic Illustrated.** Leo's talent bridged eras; though the man is gone, the art he generated remains.

—Archie Goodwin

NEXT ISSUE

FINAL PASSAGE
the conclusion of
TOADSWART
by
TIM CONRAD

plus

new stories by
P. CRAIG RUSSELL
KENT WILLIAMS
KEN MACKLIN

and

MIKE BARON &
JOHN TOTLEBEN

also
JOHNNY BADHAIR
story and cover
by
PHIL HALE

FUTUREVIEW

by John Robert Tebbel and Martha Thomases

When we were kids, there weren't any athletic shoes. There were sneakers. Our parents didn't want us to wear sneakers because, they insisted, the soft shoes had no arch support and were bad for our feet. We didn't care what Momma didn't allow, we wore them until our toes poked through the canvas anyhow. The ads promised that these wonder shoes, **Red Ball Jets, P. F. Flyers** and more, would magically make us run faster and jump higher. Just what we had in mind.

A sports-science explosion has occured since the words "Little **Olga Korbut**" inaugurated the current Age of Sport (which replaced the previous Age of Driving). The advice that was given to leather-helmeted football players of a generation ago (like a high-protein diet) seems as arcane and hilariously wrong as an alchemist's recipe for gold.

Because the sport market is now so large (over 26 million Americans describe themselves as runners, for example) and lucrative, the technology devoted to serving the market has accelerated rapidly. Sports medicine, unheard of by non-pro athletes a decade ago, is now a prominent field of practice. Physicians know more about how the body is put together, how stress affects different parts of the body and how a few slight changes in a shoe's design can minimize this stress.

Some technological improvements not only work to prevent injury, but also to extend the life of the shoe. Constant pounding can make the cushioned rubber sole lose its bounce, or flatten in an uneven manner that encourages injury. **Nike** uses something called an **Air-Sole** in several models, which to company claims can endure for 10,000 miles of pounding. Since the average runner gets only 500 good miles of wear out of a shoe, this innovation could save money as well as knees.

Some runners want more from their sport than a good workout and maybe some nice scenery. They want statistics, like good fans everywhere. For them, **Adidas** and **Puma** are both introducing the computer shoe. The **Puma** shoe, the **RS**, which will cost approximately $200 the pair, will allow a runner to connect the shoe to a home computer to find out his or her mileage and how many calories were burned. The **Adidas Micropacer** ($110-125) does about the same, but doesn't hook up to your computer to do so. Neither of these shoes claims to improve performance, but both will supply plenty of data for a nifty spreadsheet and colorful graphics. We saw a guy on the **Today Show** fearlessly forecast untold developments once computers and shoes are linked. **Futureview** holds its breath in anticipation of:

Sweat monitoring in real time. This can be adapted to recommend optimum fluid intake, proper irrigation of intradigital fungus colony for the science fair, and an exact calculation of when to change your **Odoreaters.**

Time to injury. Cement is harder than you are. Calculating the hardness of the pavement in your area, the amount of calcium in your diet and the amount of time you spend running should facilitate an estimate of when your bones or ligaments or personality will finally disintegrate.

Sorbothane is the name of the latest development in cushioning material. The "lifelike elastomer," claims to duplicate the unexcelled cushioning of natural tissue and, yes, it's a bit like a piece of meat to the touch. So far, in our field trials with a pair of bicycling gloves, it whups all other foam products, open or closed cell, all hollow. We don't know if it's being used in shoes or, a lá **Rocky**, in boxing gloves. The proprietary stuff comes from the **Spenco Medical Corporation** of Waco, Texas, who encourage you to call 1-800-433-3334 to find the name of the dealer near you.

One of the most tantalizing promises made to a runner is of a shoe designed to give back the energy normally lost overcoming gravity and friction. If they do it right, we suppose, instead of merely cushioning your foot and leg, the shoe will actually goose you along the road. This comes close to granting the runners' prayer: "If you'll just pick up my feet, oh great Deity, I'll gladly put them down." (Of course, they'll come with socks that turn sweat into **Gatorade.**)

All this equipment serves a very primitive urge—the need to play, to enjoy using our bodies. Most of us leave this behind when we "mature," only to strain to recapture it after the instinct atrophies. A lot of us want to get in shape because we fear the long, power-assisted old age promised to us by modern medicine. "If I knew I was going to live so long," goes the old joke, "I'd have taken better care of myself." When we got used to it, we liked the exercise for its own sake, for the memory retrieved of childhood energy. Yes, we'd still like to run faster and jump higher.

THE LAST GALACTUS STORY

CHAPTER SEVEN: TUNNEL IN THE SKY

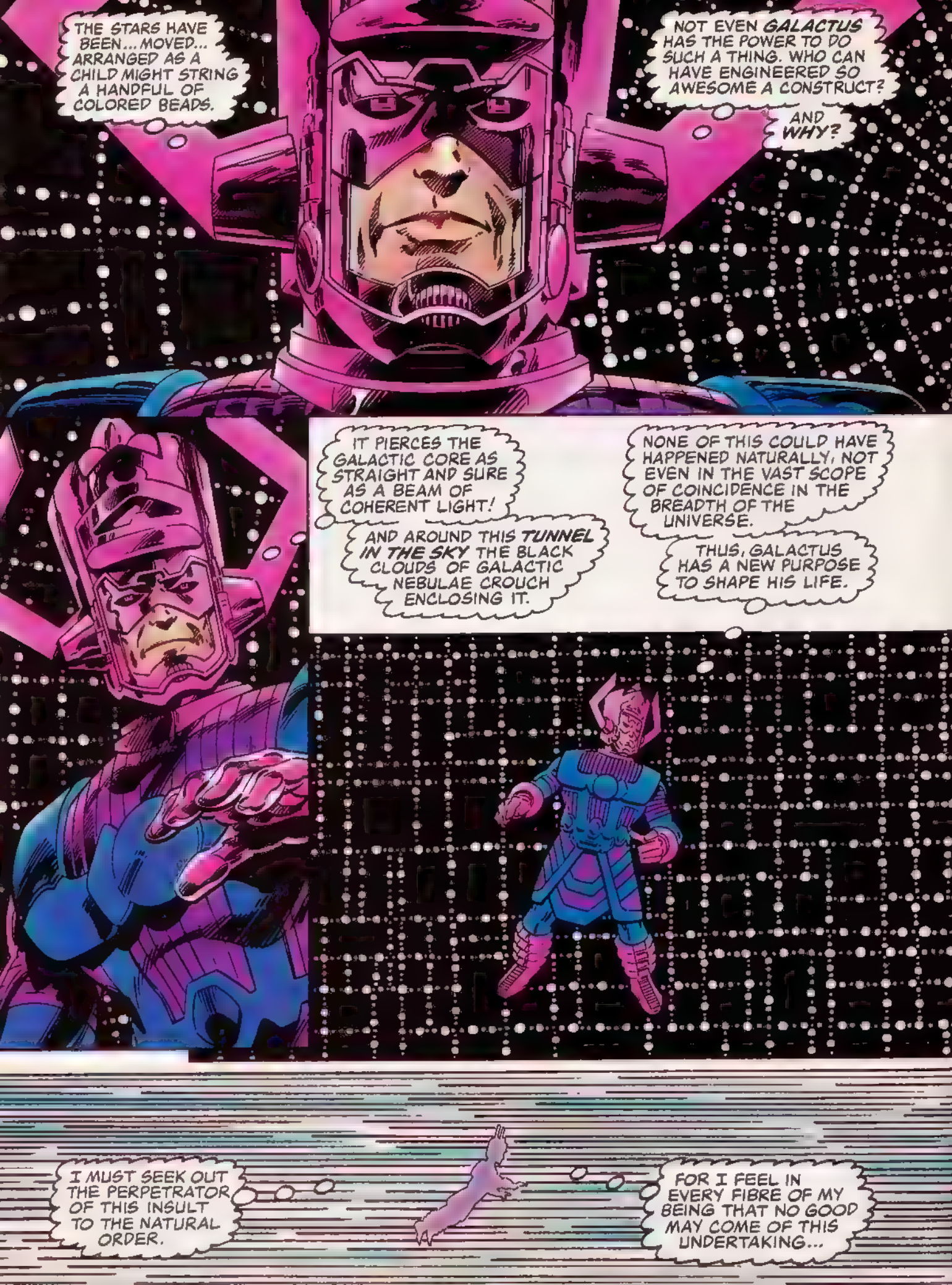
THE COLD IS NEARLY ABSOLUTE, ENOUGH TO FREEZE THE BILLOWING BLANKET OF A PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE INTO A SLENDER SHELL OF ICE, BUT HE DOES NOT NOTICE IT.

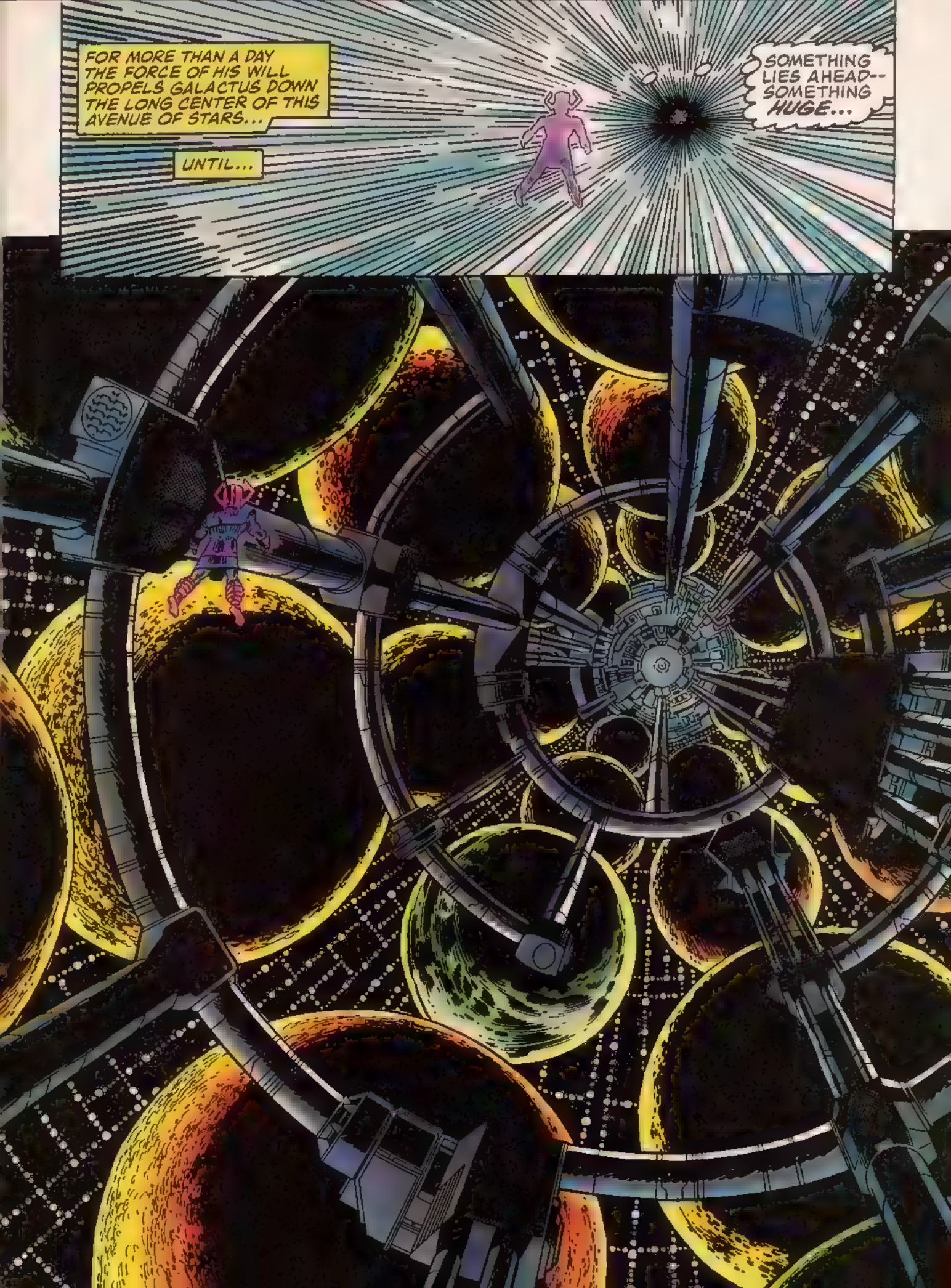
THE HUNGRY MAW OF VACUUM SUCKS AT HIM FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. SEEKING TO EXPLODE HIM INTO THE VOID, HE PAYS NO HEED.

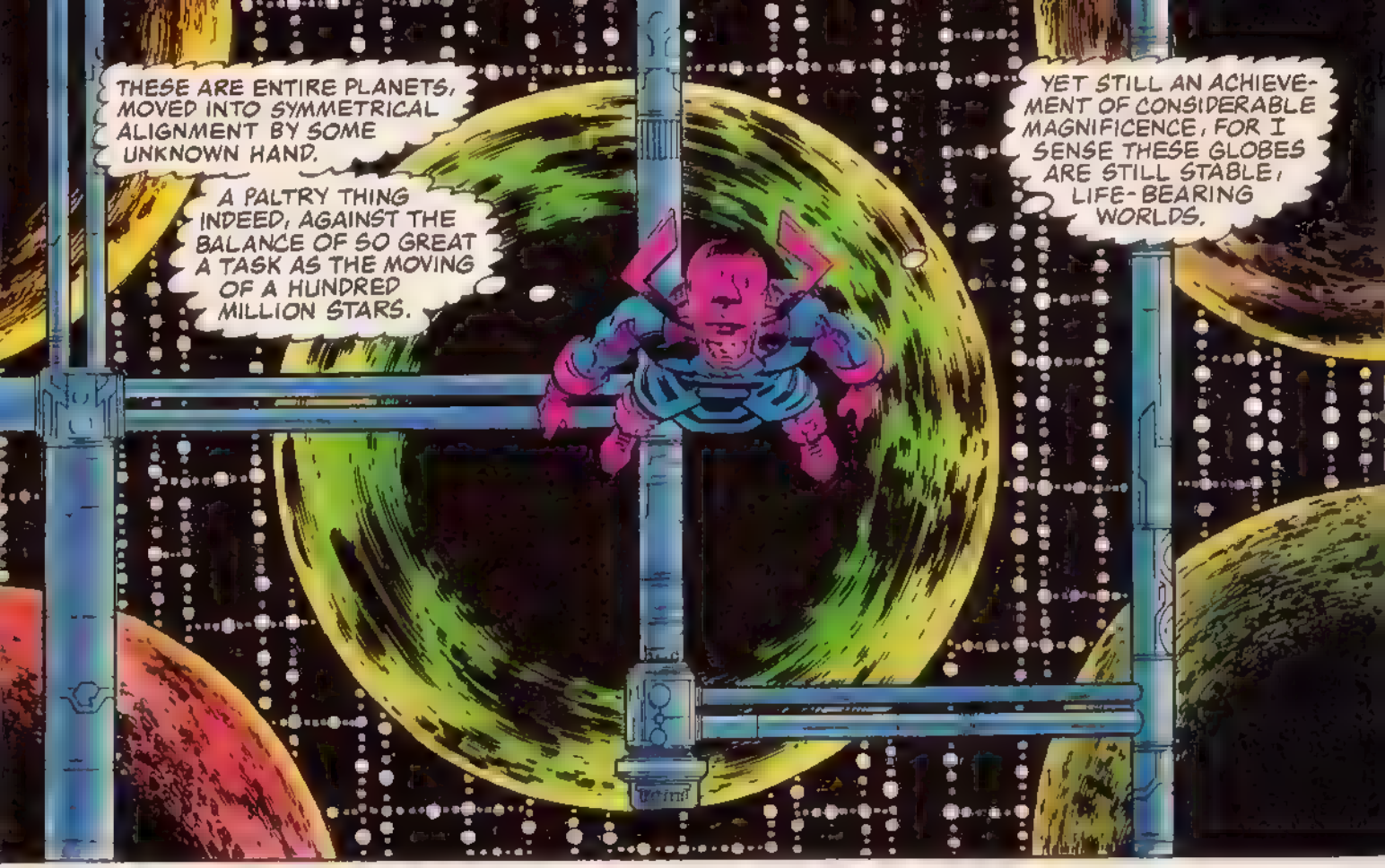
HE IS GALACTUS.

HE IS OLDER THAN SPACE, OLDER THAN TIME. A LIVING FORCE OF NATURE. BORN IN THE CATACLYSMIC DEATH OF A UNIVERSE BEYOND OUR OWN.

HE HAS SEEN MUCH IN A LIFETIME MEASURED IN THE AGE OF STARS, AND HAD THOUGHT HIMSELF BEYOND AMAZEMENT... UNTIL NOW.


THE STARS HAVE BEEN... MOVED... ARRANGED AS A CHILD MIGHT STRING A HANDFUL OF COLORED BEADS.
NOT EVEN GALACTUS HAS THE POWER TO DO SUCH A THING. WHO CAN HAVE ENGINEERED SO AWESOME A CONSTRUCT?
AND WHY?
IT PIERCES THE GALACTIC CORE AS STRAIGHT AND SURE AS A BEAM OF COHERENT LIGHT!
AND AROUND THIS TUNNEL IN THE SKY THE BLACK CLOUDS OF GALACTIC NEBULAE CROUCH ENCLOSING IT.
NONE OF THIS COULD HAVE HAPPENED NATURALLY, NOT EVEN IN THE VAST SCOPE OF COINCIDENCE IN THE BREADTH OF THE UNIVERSE.
THUS, GALACTUS HAS A NEW PURPOSE TO SHAPE HIS LIFE.
I MUST SEEK OUT THE PERPETRATOR OF THIS INSULT TO THE NATURAL ORDER.
FOR I FEEL IN EVERY FIBRE OF MY BEING THAT NO GOOD MAY COME OF THIS UNDERTAKING...


FOR MORE THAN A DAY THE FORCE OF HIS WILL PROPELS GALACTUS DOWN THE LONG CENTER OF THIS AVENUE OF STARS...
UNTIL...
SOMETHING LIES AHEAD-- SOMETHING HUGE...


THESE ARE ENTIRE PLANETS, MOVED INTO SYMMETRICAL ALIGNMENT BY SOME UNKNOWN HAND.
A PALTRY THING INDEED, AGAINST THE BALANCE OF SO GREAT A TASK AS THE MOVING OF A HUNDRED MILLION STARS.
YET STILL AN ACHIEVEMENT OF CONSIDERABLE MAGNIFICENCE, FOR I SENSE THESE GLOBES ARE STILL STABLE, LIFE-BEARING WORLDS.

TO HAVE MOVED THESE WORLDS, TO HAVE COUNTERED THE CATACLYSMIC EFFECTS ON THEIR GRAVITATIONAL FIELDS AND BIO-SPHERES WOULD REQUIRE A POWER BEYOND ANY I HAD THOUGHT TO EXIST IN THIS UNIVERSE.
THE GODS THEMSELVES MIGHT QUAIL BEFORE THE ENORMITY OF SUCH AN UNDERTAKING.

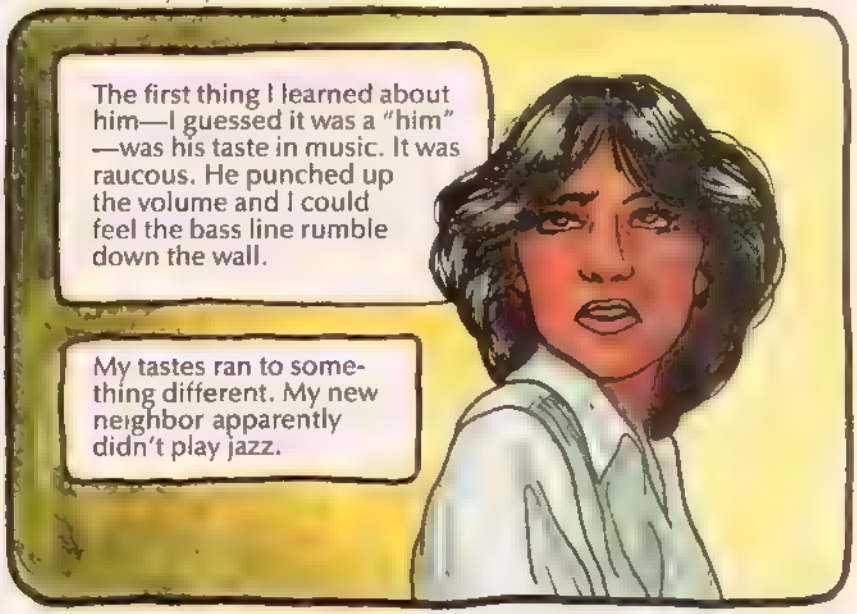
STILL, THIS PONDERING LEAVES EVERY QUESTION STILL UNANSWERED.
AND IF ANSWERS THERE BE...
THEY'LL LIE, IN PART AT LEAST, UPON THE SURFACE OF THESE DANGLING ORBS.

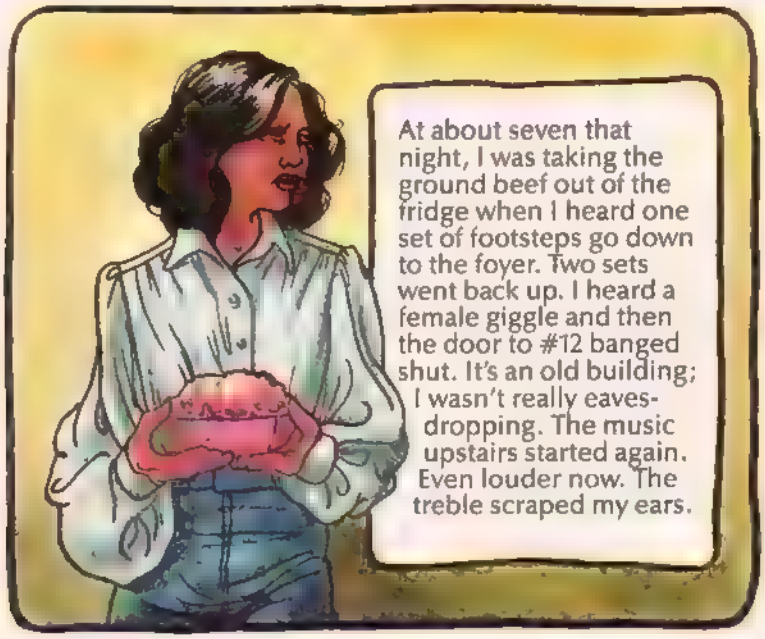
AROUND HIM THE AIR BEGINS TO BOIL, AS GALACTUS PLUNGES DEEPER INTO THE YIELDING BLANKET OF THE ATMOSPHERE.
HIGHER AND HIGHER CLIMBS THE TEMPERATURE, AS HE DROPS LOWER AND LOWER, FEELING THE EMBRACE OF GRAVITY GROWING STRONGER ABOUT HIM.
BUT NEITHER HEAT NOR INCREASE OF WEIGHT DISTURB HIM ANY MORE THAN DID THE HARD, COLD NIGHT ABOVE.

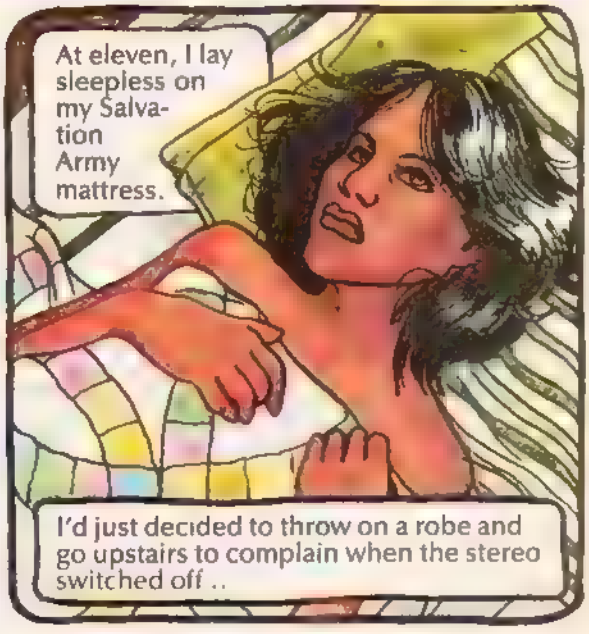
PREDATORS

script: **Edward Bryant** art: **Carol Kimball** adaptation consultant: **Leanne C. Harper**
based on the story by Edward Bryant

Another day of looking for work in the city...Still no luck. Late on a cloudy, cold October afternoon, I came home to find I had a new neighbor. I smelled the fresh label tape.


The first thing I learned about him—I guessed it was a "him" —was his taste in music. It was raucous. He punched up the volume and I could feel the bass line rumble down the wall.
My tastes ran to something different. My new neighbor apparently didn't play jazz.


At about seven that night, I was taking the ground beef out of the fridge when I heard one set of footsteps go down to the foyer. Two sets went back up. I heard a female giggle and then the door to #12 banged shut. It's an old building; I wasn't really eavesdropping. The music upstairs started again. Even louder now. The treble scraped my ears.


At eleven, I lay sleepless on my Salvation Army mattress.
I'd just decided to throw on a robe and go upstairs to complain when the stereo switched off ..

story © 1985 Edward Bryant/artwork © 1985 Carol Kimball

I curled up in a warm ball, but the respite was brief. My bedroom was right below my neighbor's. R. G. Cross's bedsprings were not exactly subtle...
I tried to ignore the rhythm, then pulled the ends of the pillow around my head when I thought I heard private cries.
After a while, the squeaking stopped and the thumping began. Something that sounded liquid spattered on the floor above. Just how weird *was* R. G. Cross? I didn't want to know. I. HATED this city. I was tired and lonely and knew I'd *never* find a job. I just wanted to go home. Home...
Some time later the noises stopped and I finally fell asleep.
I dreamed of summer...of a warm, lazy savanna afternoon, and of lush, sun-dappled foliage. It was all green and golden and smelled like life itself. I wanted to go there. I wanted to be with everyone I'd left. Mama...

I dozed away the morning and didn't get up until almost noon. It was stolen luxury. Since it was Saturday, I didn't have any interviews, but there was a sheaf of application forms to fill out.

When my eyes flickered open for good, my mind registered the time: 11:56. Digital clocks amaze me with their precision.

I remembered something vaguely from earlier in the morning when angry voices from upstairs had awakened me. I'd gone back to sleep. Let them fight. I didn't care.

I wouldn't bother my neighbors if they didn't disturb me.

It was so, *so* good to stretch every muscle in my body. I enjoyed the feeling of it for as long as I could; then got up and padded toward the bathroom.

I brushed my hair and cleaned my teeth...

...then put on my gloves, terrycloth robe, and slippers, and went downstairs to get my newspaper. The stairwell was chilly. I scented the stranger before I actually saw him.

He was taller than I. Much bigger. Blond. His shaving lotion was sharp and citrus-smelling.
Hi, there.
R. G. Cross?
I glanced at the mailbox and back at him. He had to be my new neighbor.
He grinned widely. I had no idea how sincere the expression was. For a second, all I could see were all those flawless white teeth.
That's me. Call me Roger.
His hand overpowered mine. I took my fingers away tingling, sensing he could have crushed down much harder. Roger started to make me nervous. He put my instincts on edge.
You must be L. P. Blackwell. What's it stand for?
Lisa Penelope.
Yeah? Could stand for a lot of things. Like long-playing.

Like with a record album.
Long-playing, all right.
Look, I, uh, have water boiling upstairs—
So, what's the hurry?
I need to fix breakfast.
I haven't had breakfast yet either. You like breakfast? I do. Best way to start the day.
In fact we could do it together...you know —breakfast. What kind of meat do you like in the morning...?
Um, could you move your leg?
Sure...Hey, don't mind me, L. P. I'm just feeling good today. High-spirited, you know?

Damn it! Damn them. Why are they like that?
I spent the afternoon filling out job application forms. Since I can't type, I printed neatly for two hours. But I just couldn't concentrate...
So finally I brewed some fragrant cambric tea.
KNOCK KNOCK
KNOCK KNOCK

Oh, hi
..Hello.

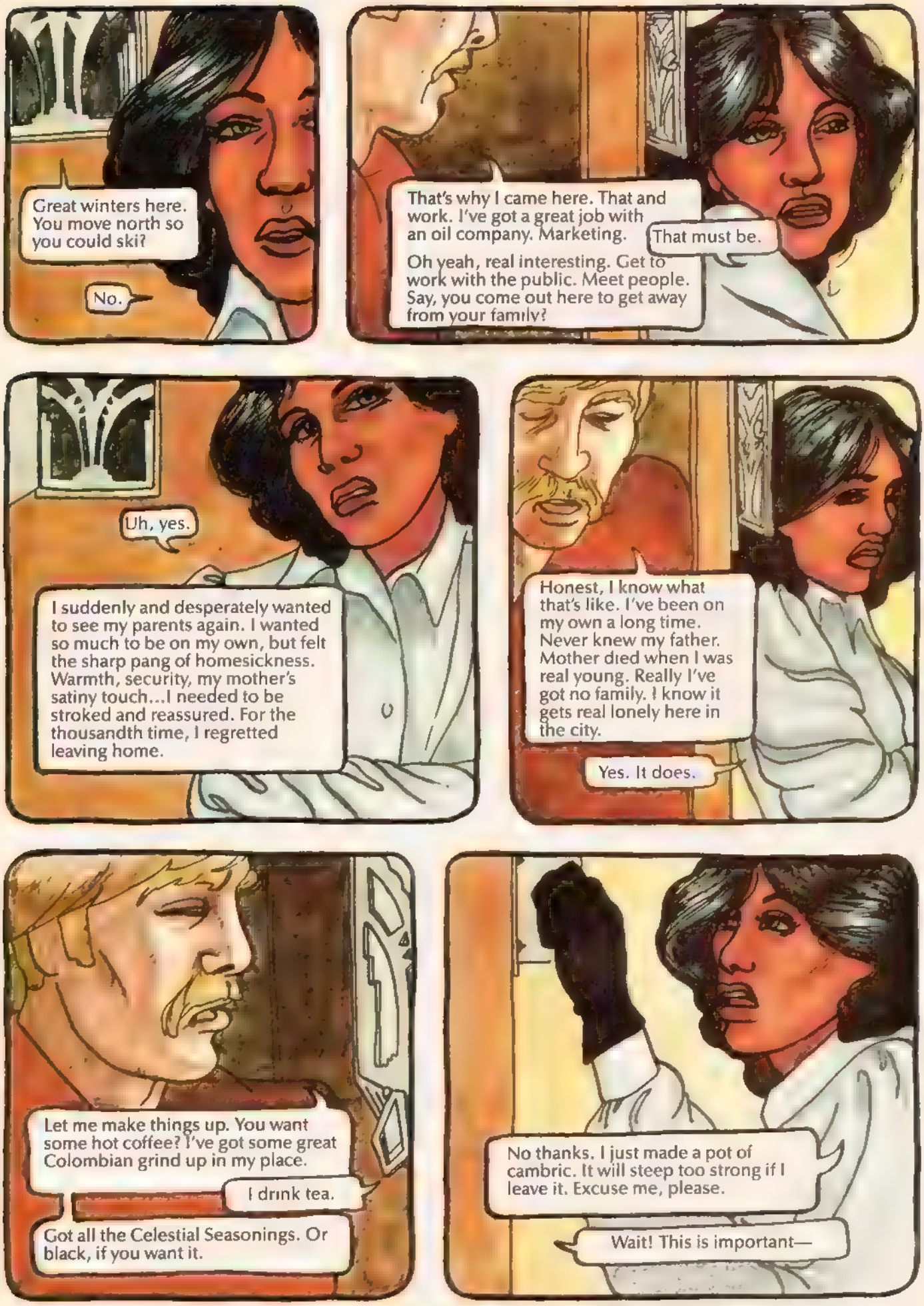
Hey, listen. I want to apologize for stepping out of line before. I didn't mean to be such a turkey.
It's all right. Thanks, though.
Say, could I come in?

You know, just for a little while? We could sit down and talk. Get acquainted. Honest, I really want to be a good neighbor.
And friends.

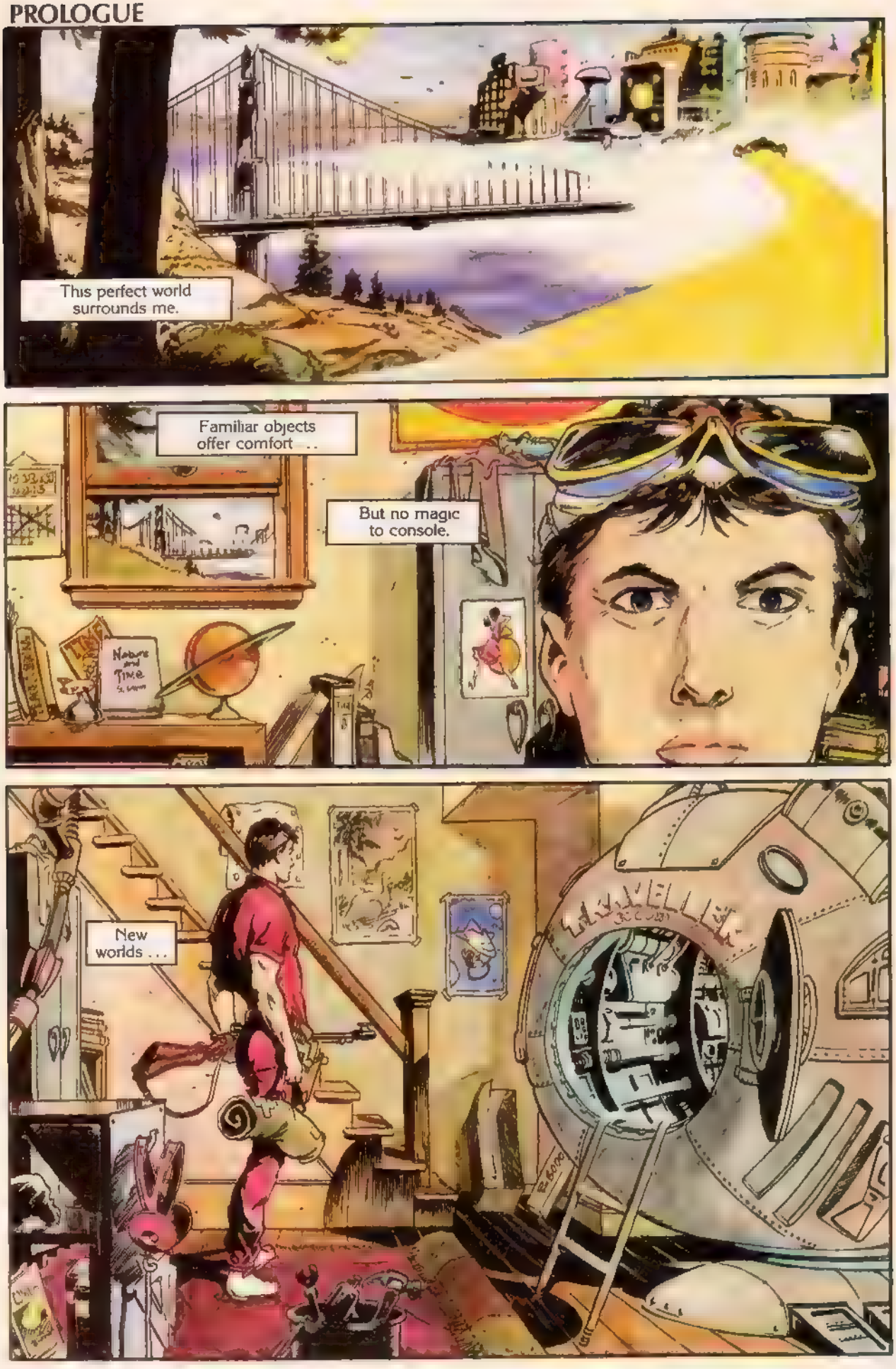
Not— now, thanks. I wasn't expecting company and—
I don't mind a mess. You should see my place. A real sty...
No. Really. We—I can't.
Hey, L. P. You living on your own for the very first time?

How'd you know that?
Just guessed. You look pretty young. Going to college?
No. I haven't had much formal schooling.
Neat accent. I can't quite place it. From the south?

A ways.


Great winters here. You move north so you could ski?
No.
That's why I came here. That and work. I've got a great job with an oil company. Marketing.
That must be.
Oh yeah, real interesting. Get to work with the public. Meet people. Say, you come out here to get away from your family?
Uh, yes.
I suddenly and desperately wanted to see my parents again. I wanted so much to be on my own, but felt the sharp pang of homesickness. Warmth, security, my mother's satiny touch...I needed to be stroked and reassured. For the thousandth time, I regretted leaving home.
Honest, I know what that's like. I've been on my own a long time. Never knew my father. Mother died when I was real young. Really I've got no family. I know it gets real lonely here in the city.
Yes. It does.
Let me make things up. You want some hot coffee? I've got some great Colombian grind up in my place.
I drink tea.
Got all the Celestial Seasonings. Or black, if you want it.
No thanks. I just made a pot of cambric. It will steep too strong if I leave it. Excuse me, please.
Wait! This is important—

PREDATORS continues on page 91



© 1985 Bo Hampton

. . . must lie some-where.
2005
1865
1311
211,111 B.C.
New worlds . . .
. . . worth the journey, the ultimate goal.

FANTASTIC! LOOKS LIKE I'VE HIT THE LAST HALF OF THE QUARTER-NARY ERA...
MAYBE I'LL RUN INTO AN ANCESTOR--
--OR TWO!
STOMP! CRASH!
CRIPES! A BULL MAMMOTH!
GOT TO GET HIM AWAY FROM THE SHIP!
Bo Hampton '84
TRAVELLER

IF I CAN JUST MAKE THOSE VINES...!
YOWW!
WHAT A RUSH! NOW THIS IS LIVING!
I DON'T KNOW WHY THE GOVERNMENT PUT A BAN ON TIME TRAVEL.
THE TRAVELLER IS A DEPENDABLE ENOUGH SHIP... FOR A KIT MODEL.

AS LONG AS I DON'T RADICALLY CHANGE ANYTHING, I'LL BE FINE.
JUST HAVE TO STAY CALM--
WOULD YA LOOK AT THAT?!!
HUNTING PARTY HAS A SABRE-TOOTHED TIGER CORNERED!
LOOKS LIKE HE MIGHT GET AWAY.
BUT HE'S BADLY WOUNDED... POOR DEVIL.

SUNDOWN
WOW! AN EOHIPPUS! I'VE GOT TO GET A CLOSER LOOK AT IT!!
WAIT A MINUTE...
REEEEEEE!
SQUEEEE!
REEEEEE!
WELL, I'M DOIN' OKAY... ;HUFF!; ...HAVEN'T HAD TO... ;PUFF!; ...KILL ANYTHING... SO FAR! STILL GOT ALL MY GEAR...
REALLY SHOULD... STOP SMOKING...!

NEXT WEEK... MAY-BE.
GRRR
WHA?!
LOST A LOT OF BLOOD... BUT HE'S CRAZY WITH PAIN!
NO CHOICE...!
HE WOULD HAVE DIED ANYWAY... BUT I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE CHANCES. BETTER GET BACK.

DAMN!! IT SURE WAS A LOT EASIER GOING DOWN!
WHAT'S THAT LIGHT?
WELL, I DIDN'T SEE ANY LIGHTNING BOLTS OR LAVA BEDS... SO I GUESS THE HISTORY BOOKS WERE WRONG!
PEKING MAN COULD CONJURE FIRE.
NOT THE FIRST TIME--OR THE LAST--THAT THE EXPERTS WERE WRONG. PROVES THE VALUE OF THESE TRIPS AN'--
HOLY...!
ARTILLERY IN THE 14TH CENTURY?

THIS IS ALL WRONG! WORLD WAR TWO HAPPENING IN 1766?!
EVERYTHING'S HAPPENING TOO FAST... TOO FAST!
2216
NUCLEAR WAR... IT'S ALREADY COME!!
WHAT... HAVE... I... DONE?

New worlds. Raw. Imperfect.
Stripped of the familiar,
calling to the bold.
New
worlds,
for any
traveller . . .
. . . who can forever forsake the old.
from Journey by Eliot Humboldt

BOOKVIEW

by Jo Duffy

There's a lot of bad writing out there. A *lot* of it. And much of it seems to find its way onto the bookshelves in the form of genre writing. You know. The s-f and fantasy series potboilers...the romances...the Regency romances... the sweet savage romances...the detective thrillers...the spy thrillers... and so on. Which is really a shame, because these frequently junky story types can include some of the most personable characters and satisfying plots there are. There's nothing like good genre fiction to help you turn off your brain, relax, and escape whatever's bugging you. But only when the writing itself is good.

Which is why I came into the office, one day last week, in a fulminating rage...I had treated myself to a couple of days of bad entertainment, as a safety valve for some incredible ugliness going down in and around the workplace...and found that the junk I had chosen was really bad. So bad, in fact, with such clumsy word useage and inconsistent pacing and characterization, that far from relaxing me, it left me feeling cheated and frustrated...as though I'd been poisoning my brain instead of indulging myself.

Margaret Clark—associate editor of this magazine, among others—let me rant for a while, nodding sagely. Then, she produced from within her desk an unlikely looking tome, assuring me that she'd been saving it for just such a time as this. It was, **Margaret** insisted, a good, exciting book...and one that was beautifully written, as well.

Now, I've learned from experience to respect ol' **Margaret's** judgment... even when it conflicts with my own instincts and prejudices. Which—coupled with my desperate desire to be entertained without having to undergo a frontal lobotomy—explains why I accepted a book I would otherwise have run from, screaming, a book which, on sight, pushes every one of my "This has got to be mawkish, self-indulgent, and illiterate," buttons. I'm glad I took it. It *was* well written. And it made me feel a whole hell of a lot better than I had in a while, happy and relaxed, and more than a little nostalgic.

It's called **Ishmael,** it was written by **Barbara Hambly,** and it's a **Star Trek®** novel from **Pocket Books.**

I'll bet right now, those of you who haven't thrown down the page with a guffaw at this point are as astonished by my recommendation as I was by **Margaret's.** Don't be. You don't need to be a Trekkie (or Trekker) to love this book. In fact, you need never have even seen or heard of **Star Trek** to enjoy it.

The author has done her homework...everything you need to enjoy this story is given to you as you go along...with nothing extraneous thrown in. The characters, the hardware, the politics, the set-ups of the **Star Trek** galaxy are all in here...so well defined and fresh that they could have been created by **Hambly,** for this one book.

Now...what's even more interesting, and more fun is that...Around the same time as **Star Trek** was in its initial broadcast, there was another little show on, one that many of us loved. It was called **Here Come the Brides,** and it was a sort of **Seven Brides for Seven Brothers** done on a grand scale. A trio of brothers who owned a heavily wooded mountain and ran a logging camp in Seattle in the Nineteenth Century, wanted to import a large number of eligible young women, so that their lumberjacks would marry and settle down, rather than moving on to other, more enticing locales. The brothers' archrival, a somewhat villainous and exceedingly capitalistic sawmill owner agreed to finance the entire venture...with a twist: if any of the young ladies was not at least engaged by the end of one year, the sawmill owner would get 51% of the mountain as compensation.

Ishmael resolves the bet. I'm not going to tell you how. If you never saw **Here Come the Brides,** you wouldn't be interested. If you did, you simply *must* read the book. (Also, I'm not sure I know how *all* of it was settled...the copyright problems must have been monumental.) Incidentally, you need never have seen that show, either, to enjoy this book. And, there are a plethora of unobtrusive, delightful, visitations and cameos from a host of characters from other books, films, and series, none of them identified by name, and all of them fun to spot. Many of the nameless background figures in **Ishmael** could appear in a Who's Who of Twentieth Century pop culture.

* * *

*Oh, **now** I get it!*

It will probably not surprise the cynics among you that I am recommending **Michael Wm. Kaluta** and **Elaine Lee's StarStruck. StarStruck** is, after all, an **Epic Comics** series, as well as a **Marvel Graphic Novel** which yours truly helped to edit. However, proud and fond as I am of both those incarnations of **StarStruck,** neither one is what I am recommending here. What I refer to in this column is the newly published *script* of **StarStruck,** available in comics shops, and from **Broadway Play Publishing, Inc.**

Now, as the cognoscenti already know, **StarStruck** began as a play, by **Elaine Lee, Susan Norfleet Lee,** and **Dale Place,** with designs by **Mike Kaluta.** However, many have made the entirely understandable mistake of assuming that the graphic novel, at least, and perhaps some of the comics as well, are an adaptation of that play. In fact, the adventure that takes place in the play is chronologically the *last* adventure of **StarStruck's** characters yet to be told...and it has never been adapted into graphic form.

Rather, the novel and comics are an elaborate series of prequels—the origin stories of the drama's various characters, and the tale of how all of them got from where they began to being drawn together, into the one great adventure that theatregoers knew they were destined to share. Both are things of beauty. The art is lyrical and lovely, and the writing is smooth and sophisticated...Perhaps a mite *too* sophisticated. A charge that has been laid against the series by its critics, perhaps with a measure of justice, is that it's too darned complicated to follow. In each thirty page issue, there are a minimum of six to twelve different plotlines being developed, each with its own in jokes, and with a minimum of several characters apiece. That's a pretty tall order to keep track of on a bi-monthly basis, I'll admit.

The play, which comes lavishly illustrated with photographs from both productions of the story, as well as a great deal of beautiful **Kaluta** artwork, is a romp. It involves all of the main characters from all of the stories we've seen so far, in one long, free-wheeling adventure. It's funny, fun, and exciting, with stylish dialogue and characterization, nicely paced action, and some very touching, sensitive developments, thrown in toward the end.

Retroactively, it makes the comics and novel easier and more fun to read. But you needn't have ever seen either to enjoy this. Give it a try.

Remember: the fate of the free universe is in your hands.

DO YOU LIKE INGRAM MAC-10s? MODEL '45 HARLEY-DAVIDSONS? GIRLS IN BLACK LEATHER? LA LEGION ÉTRANGERE? VINTAGE AIRPLANES WITH MACHINE GUNS STRAPPED TO THEIR WINGS? THEN YOU'LL LOVE

NOT FOR WIMPS OR GEEKS . . .

TO BE A...

CHAMPION

They *have* her! *This* time they have her! Whenever we strike against the Citadel, Karna rallies their legions and strikes down our *best*—
But *this* time, they—
JAMES GELDHOF 84'

story © 1985 Archie Goodwin/artwork © 1985 James Geldhof

Perish! As wasteland barbarians *always* have when trying to conquer civilization's last bastion!
Damn Karna and damn the Citadel! Will we *ever* have a champion to equal theirs?
Not while Karna has such *power* at her command, Queen Zir.
And that weapon is *part* of her, Lyliss. If entire *armies* cannot wrest it away—
Perhaps a thief, a spy *can*. I am *both*, my Queen. None better.
Do it. And *any* reward is yours!

By night, Zir's horde was gone. Wagons rolled from the Citadel to collect the bodies of the battle-slain.

Hidden among them...*Lyliss*. Slipping away as the wagon moved toward the cremation tower...

...she made her way to the Festival Hall, where, after the honoring of the dead, the traditional victory celebration began.
And as the revels reached their height...

no one noticed an unfamiliar
Potent batch ...of mead...! Making my head...*spin* so...! I—
—need *air*...!
None gave it much thought. The champion had earned the right to overindulgence...
...and to be allowed some privacy in suffering ...
...the consequences.
A fine *blow* against the place that plucked my eye and cast me out for thievery. And I'm not *finished* yet!
The Citadel's drainage aqueducts provided Lyliss with her escape route...to the wastelands, the camp of Queen Zir, and...

...her reward.
Let me be *your* champion, majesty!
You covet Karna's fame, the power she controlled, my thief? Very well...
...but it means *sacrifice*.
I am—
—prepared.
Now, brave Lyliss ...a *test* of your new power before our legions.
First I bring down the beast, then...*The Citadel!* Like—

—T-THIS?! My Queen...No! The w-weapon...! I... I...
I CANNOT CONTROL IT!
IT STRIKES ON ITS OWN!
As I ever have, foolish one. Before the ruin, the collapse, I was created to protect the Citadel and to cybernetically control any I am attached to to accomplish that task. Now, back, slave—
—you have a job to do. And under my care, it could last forever.
And slowly, painfully, Lyliss staggered toward the one place she would always hate.

FEEDBACK

letters & comments

Dear Stan and Archie,

Your **Epic #29** issue was a great pleasure to read. Especially **Ghosts In The Machine** which gave a superb atmosphere of the computer world with a splendid script to accompany it.

Another great was **Rider** by **Jonn Zack.** What an artist, definitely one of a kind.

Night Run has its share of praise, and special mention to **Rich Buckler** for adapting a genuine story to accompany the cover of **A Matter Of Vengeance.** On the whole, this issue was fab as usual. One more thing! I don't like the word bi-monthly, especially when I can't purchase your individual **Epic** comics as I live on the other side of the world. I envy the American **Epic** readers.

Costas Kalantis
South Africa

Thanks for the words of praise, *Costas.* By the way, many of our *Epic* comics series are available by subscription to readers both in and out of the United States. A letter to the attention of the subscription department, at our address, asking about them and including a stamped self-addressed envelope should get you a reply.

Dear Stan and Archie,

I've been reading **Epic** now for about a year. It really amazes me how you can be so consistent in bringing your readers as good fantasy and science-fiction artwork as you have. Each story is always bubbling with its very own style and personality.

For instance, **Pepe Moreno, Mark Bodè** and **Rich Geary** are a few of my favorite artists because they never fail to bring me excitement, color, jazz, and imaginative characters who all have their own distinct personalities.

So thank you **Epic,** for inspiring me to imagine and dream.

Chris Gould
Normal, IL

And thank you, *Chris.*

Dear Stan and Archie,

Hi! I'm 9½ years old, and this is the first time I wrote a letter to a magazine, so consider yourselves privileged!

You couldn't imagine how happy I was when I discovered there was a feature on Galactus in **Epic** (a title I was not familiar with until recently—that is because my brother maintains that it is "an adult magazine" and that it would not be proper for me to read it! To be honest, I don't know what he was talking about). Fortunately, he has changed his mind after seeing how enthusiastic I am about **The Last Galactus Story.**

I think it has been an excellent idea to give the Big G his own title. I'm sorry it couldn't have been a maxi-series or even a graphic novel for he deserves it! But I think **Epic's** format does him justice anyway. I'm also very pleased to see **Mr. Byrne** doing the honors in collaboration with **Terry Austin.** I think he is the only person in the business who can draw Galactus right. I'm not going to hide the fact that I'm madly in love with him (Galactus, not **John Byrne**). I mean, there is no one quite like him in real life, comic-book land or in time and space. Frankie Raye was very lucky to become his herald. I would give my soul to trade places with Frankie and spend the last days of the Universe by his side.

He is so cute and cuddly, I can barely stand it!

I almost forgot. In issue 30, there was a certain letter by a **Mike Grogan** (Arkadelphia) with regard to my hero which I found extremely offensive.

This man dared write saying that Galactus' head gear reminded him of a garbage disposal. Well, **Mr. Grogan,** either you have extremely fashionable garbage disposals in Arkadelphia or whichever planet you come from or you just have no taste whatsoever. I'm sure many people would agree with that—I bet you are just an ugly, ordinary little wimp and not worth wasting too much ink on so go take a ride on a comet and leave my sexy Big G. alone, O.K ?

Apart from that unpleasant matter, the issue was great and very interesting. Please keep up the quality and good work. Cheers!

I'm also a great artist! (Eat your heart out, John!)

Sarah Parry
London, England

"Cute...cuddly..."?!? *Sarah*...you're talking about a guy who chows down on inhabited planets. Like, in a recent installment, ours. On the other hand, if that's how the big guy wants his friends and admirers to think of him, we're not gonna argue. ("How do you describe Galactus? Any way he wants you to!").

Dear Stan and Archie,

When is the graphic novel (copy of) **The Last Galactus Story** coming out? You had better do this because I don't want to wear out all the **Epic** issues involved from reading it over and over and over, etc.

The article **Infinity** I enjoyed. When the art portfolio is available please let me know.

I completely agree with **Dennis** in **Mediaview,** which is why I pray in church for the whole world. The part I agree completely with is his last three sentences.

Yeah, **Jo** and **Kent** for **The Sign.** I loved it. The violence was just the right amount for the idea. **Dreadstar**—Thank You! Thank you!

Jennifer Jones

At present; there are no firm plans for an immediate reprint of *The Last Galactus Story, Jennifer,* especially since the series is still running. However, we suspect that given the popularity of the character a reprint will ultimately become inevitable. In the meantime, handle those *Epics* with care.

Dear Stan and Archie,

Do you have any idea how frustrated you make me, always going on about all these intriguing comics (like **Groo, The Black Dragon**) that supposedly are available in any comics specialty store? I have no idea where to find one of the stores you speak of, nor would I be able to get to one on a regular basis anyway! Please...is it possible to get these comics and others by mail? I loved **Marada** in your past issues and would like to see more of **Bolton's** work. In the meantime, keep up the high quality level of your magazine! Thanks.

Valerie Lea Palmer
Red Creek, NY

As we mentioned before, *Valerie,* an inquiry to *Marvel's* subscription department might enable you to get our *Epic* comics by mail. Or, look in the yellow pages of your phone books under "bookstores" for listings of comics specialty shops. Many such shops also advertise in the pages of *Marvel's* regular newsstand comics. And, of course, some *Epic* comics—like *Groo, Elfquest* and

(continues on page 42)

***Dreadstar and Company,* are available on ordinary newsstands right now.**

Dear Stan and Archie

In a recent issue of **Mile High Futures, Christian Harper** asked readers to read **George Orwell's 1984,** but not because it is a neat-o book. Rather, she felt that it was an important book dealing with important subjects that we as a culture should be aware of more. For some reason **The Last Galactus Story** sprung to mind. Here we are a few installments down the line and still not enough story to fill a piss bottle. Two obvious problems present themselves.

The first: **John Byrne** is not the greatest writer. The fact that I just finished re-reading a masterwork like **John Crowley's Little Big** does little to sway me towards **Mr. Byrne's** side here. Maybe comparing **John Byrne** to **George Orwell** or **John Crowley** is not very fair, but I would also not compare **The Last Galactus Story** to **Denny O'Neil's Daredevil,** save in jest. **Mr. Byrne** is also writing this story as though it were appearing in the Marvel Universe. The only significant occurrence in issue #30's installment was the destruction of Earth. Now, your average **Spider-Man** reader might find this a revelation, but your average **Epic** reader is probably something of a s-f enthusiast. We've seen Earth destroyed many a time. Anyway what does Galactus' snacking of the Earth have to do with the rest of the story? Maybe next month we discover that it is a vital part of the story, but more likely **Mr. Byrne** just wanted to destroy the world.

The second: The installments are only six beautifully illustrated pages long.

By now you would get the impression that I hate **John.** That is far from the truth. In fact, I NEVER miss an issue of the **FF** or **Alpha Flight. John** wants to publish his stuff in a Big Boy Magazine like **Epic.** Okay, but he will have to realize that a larger percentage of his readers are people who regularly read **Ellison, Heinlein** or **Shakespeare.** He is a big fish that has just jumped out of a little pond.

Stories like **young Cerebus, Unicorn Autumn** and **The Sign** are so simplistic they come across as warm and personal. Whereas **The Last Galactus Story** tries to be so cosmically important it fails as being much of anything. There are more excellent comic book artists than excellent comic book writers but people like **Jo Duffy, Alan Zelenetz** and, of course **Archie Goodwin** are doing their best to even the scales.

This letter has gone far too long but I would like to say in closing, "I love every panel of **Cobalt 60.**"

Jim Chapman
Ville Platte, LA

***Jim,* despite your much-appreciated praise of a number of *Epic's* contributors—including two of this magazine's editors—we have to take exception to your round denunciation of *The Last Galactus Story.* Criticizing *John Byrne's* writing because you dislike it or feel it's flawed is certainly valid; condemning a comic story because you feel it compares unfavorably with some of the finest novels and plays in the English language seems a little extreme and a little unfair. Whether the Earth has been destroyed before should not matter. How well it was destroyed in this instance does. Obviously, every one of us should aspire to equal or surpass the best when we set out to create. And when we fail, we appreciate having it pointed out to us. But...maybe with a little less venom.**

Dear Stan and Archie,

I would like to express my disappointment in your **Cobalt 60** series. I was first introduced to **Vaughn Bodé's** work in **National Lampoon.** I admire it greatly. His son **Mark** carries on his father's artistic work very well but it is a shame to see it wasted on such poor writing skills as **Larry Todd's.** For one thing, the series is called **Cobalt 60,** right? In **Vaughn Bodé's** original series Cobalt 60 was the main character; where is he in your series? The whole plot centers around those two dull characters Polonium 210 and Strontium 90. Granted, they are important but **Todd** overemphasizes their roles. (I believe the story should be told from Cobalt 60's point of view). Also, **Todd** explains too much. Instead of letting the story unfold like good stories do, **Todd** explains every political, material, historical background of every character as if we were all bloody morons! This trait is very insulting to my intelligence. Also it doesn't make the story enjoyable. Also, **Cobalt 60,** from what I gather from what I read in **National Lampoon,** was originally a satire. What you're publishing is not.

I'm sorry I'm ripping your ears off, but I loved Cheech Wizard and **Vaughn Bodé.** I guess it pains me to think of people being exposed to **Bodé's** work through **Larry Todd's** inept writing skills. They are getting the wrong impression. I have to voice my opinion. Kind of a catharsis. I've been wanting to write this letter for so long.

By the way, how many more installments before **Cobalt 60** is over with?

Mary Cusack
Westfield, MA

By the time you read this, *Cobalt 60* will have reached its conclusion...and the main character figured far more prominently in the later chapters than the earlier. We hope that pleased you. Like you, we're all big fans of *Vaughn's* work...particularly Cheech, who appeared in *Epic #'s 19* and *23*. The original, black and white *Cobalt 60* story was also reprinted here, in issue #27. We agree that *Larry Todd* does not write things as *Vaughn* did. However, he was the obvious choice to work with *Mark* on this series. During *Vaughn Bodé's* lifetime, the two men often teamed up, and much of the public's initial exposure to *Vaughn's* artwork was all through *Larry Todd's* far-from-inept writing skills, *Mary.*

Dear Stan and Archie,

I have just read my first issue of **Epic Illustrated** and was rather impressed by a number of things. The reason that I bought the issue in the first place was the handsome cover by **Berni Wrightson.**

Might I suggest for **The Last Galactus Story** that you print it in black and white? It seems that nowadays everybody thinks that every comic strip will look better if it's printed in color on Baxter paper. This just isn't true. I think **John Byrne's** art looks much better on ordinary newsprint than in **Epic Illustrated,** and I think it would probably look better in black and white, too.

I did, however, thoroughly enjoy the **Cerebus** color story, as much as I enjoy it as it is printed regularly in black and white.

Another favorite strip of mine in this issue was **Cobalt 60.** I will certainly be pleased to read more of this in upcoming issues.

Journey to Outer Earth was a very strange and interesting story which I liked. I have seen other short comic strips by **Rick Geary** in **Twisted Tales** which I thought were rather stupid, so I was pleasantly surprised when I read this tale.

Toadswart was a good story, I thought. I suppose I will have to purchase back issues to fully understand

(continues on page 75)

Portfolio

THE AGES OF CEREBUS

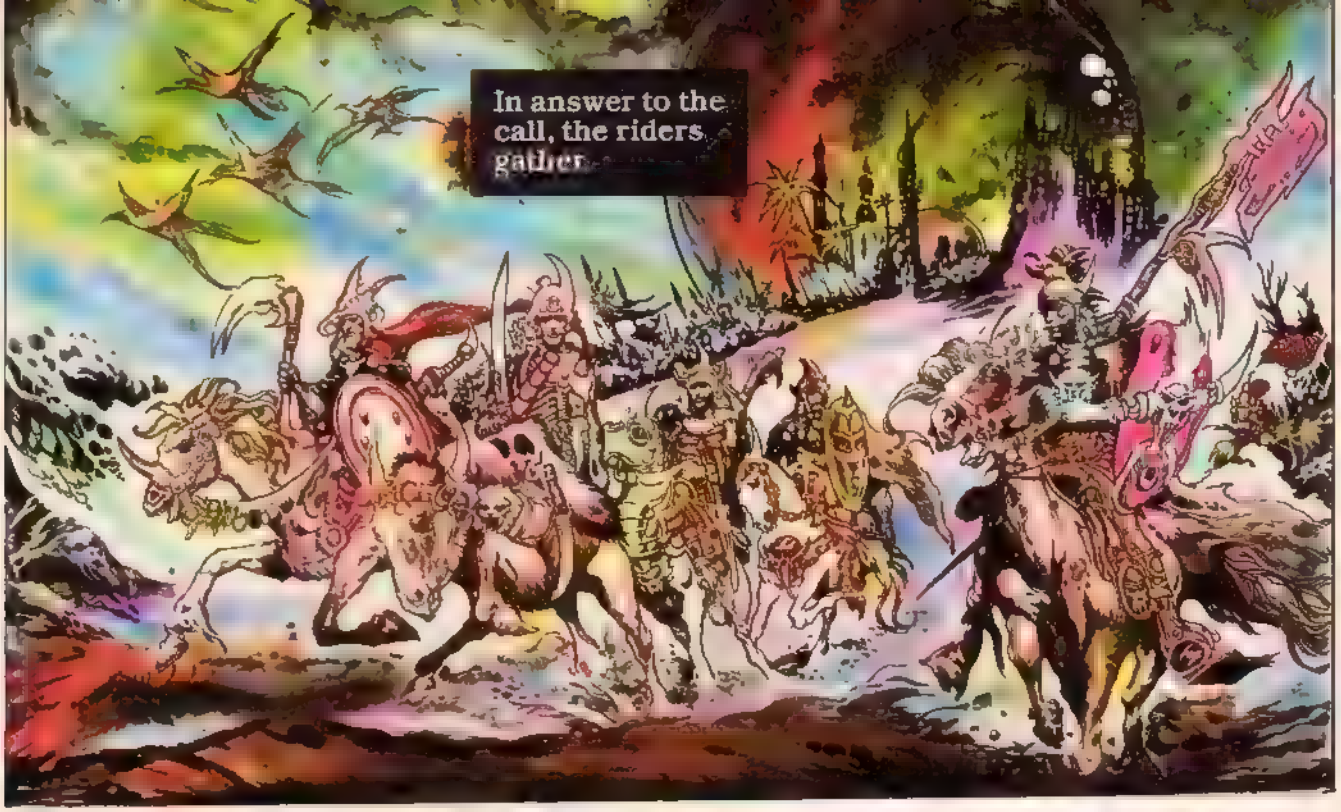
Over the past year, we've featured stories of Dave Sim's remarkable comics creation, Cerebus the Aardvark. These short adventures, his first in full color, deal almost exclusively with the youthful Cerebus, but in his own monthly black-and-white comic book, published by Sim's company, Aardvark-Vanaheim, the earth pig's adult life is shown in its many facets. In this special portfolio by Dave and his collaborator, Gerhard, a few of those facets are revealed for Epic readers.

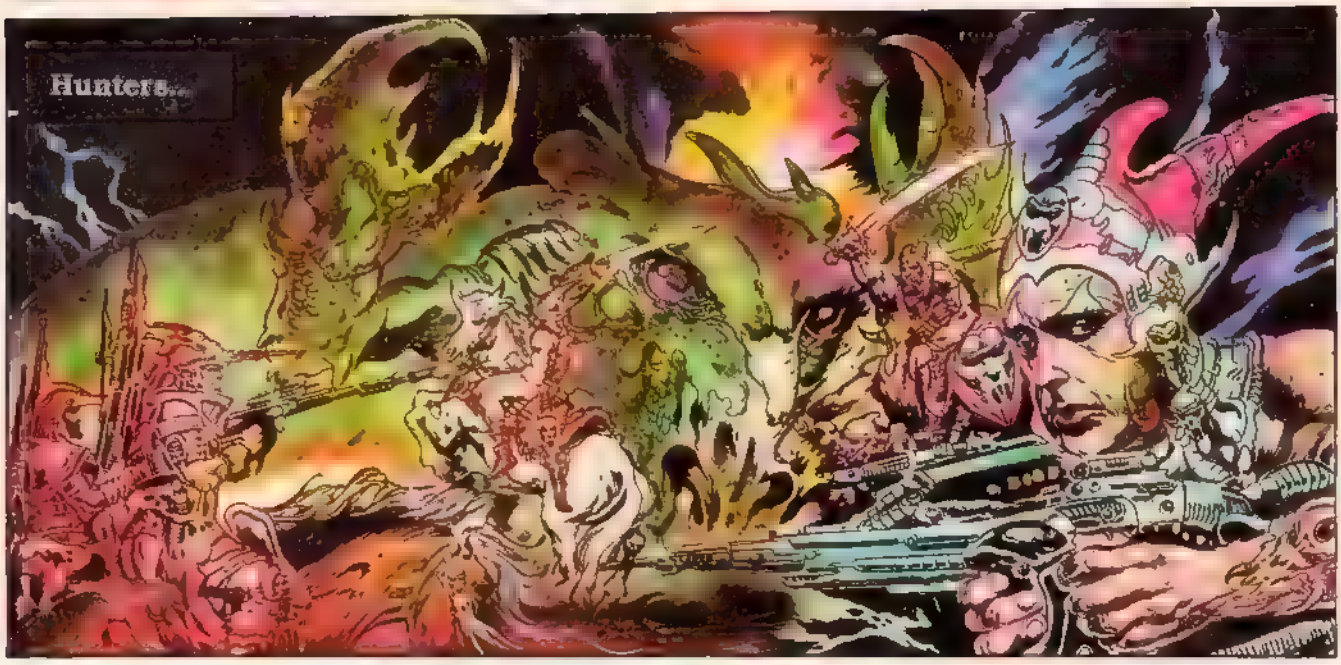
© 1985 Dave Sim

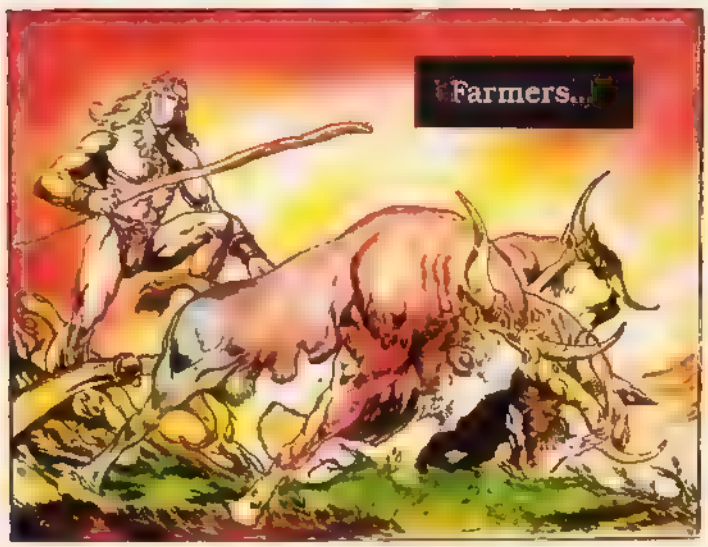
Cerebus first appeared to his ever-growing audience as a sword-swinging adventurer striding the mythic world of Estarcion (as shown on the previous page) and it remains one of the most popular phases of his career (would you tell anyone with a stare like that that this wasn't a popular phase?). But not everything can be won by the sword. Graft, chicanery, and the ability to out-campaign a goat led to the aarvark becoming Prime Minister (above) of lest. Below, the youth Epic readers know and love; full of grit, pluck, mettle, and a precocious talent for brutal extortion.

How do you top being Prime Minister? Well, while attempting to decide, you might spend some time as a Samurai Warrior. To our knowledge, Cerebus has yet to ever do this. However, in the three hundred issues that Sim has planned for the telling of the Aardvark's life, there are about two hundred and twenty-five yet to go. Anything is possible. Meantime, we have the portrait on the upper-right to ponder and wonder over. Getting back to the original question, (and the last offering in our earth pig gallery) how does becoming Pope sound to you for a topper? In recent issues, Cerebus has become the Most Holy Pontiff of the Western Church of the Living Tarim (or just Most Holy to friends and supplicants). Pretty far from the youthful hi-jinx we've seen in Epic? Maybe. But you'll find a heart-warming sort of familiarity in the Pontiff's flair for extortion.

The call, mystic, primal echoes through the stars to the heroes, the legends...
...the fierce gods of battle. The call goes out. But it is also a scream.
NAGRUL RISING


In answer to the call, the riders gather...


Hunters...


Farmers...

Toilers of the sea...

They leave their lands, their worlds, their families, their homes...
...to swell the legions' ranks...
...to launch their march toward the rim of the stars.
With each step, the signs grow. Chaos. Obscenity. The red tide of madness.
Nagrul rises. The end of ends.

On the brink, they poise, minds dancing with a thousand thoughts...
...that ultimately become one. Nagrul. Most accept this with resolve. Some however...
...break. Turn on their own...
...and die.
Then, the cry goes up.
The time is at hand.

NAGRUL RISES.

The battle is joined.

Nagrul. Beast with a million forms and faces, but one dark, corrupting soul. **Nagrul.** Anvil on which to shatter swords, weapons, and deeds of the gods.

But so terrible is that shattering...
...even Nagrul dies. The rising is stemmed.
But an age has been slain.

In its death throes there are no longer the noble strivings of heroes and legends. Nagrul has perished but not without tainting all who remain.
They too die...
...but their seed lives on, planted in the ruin at the rim of the stars; a new world born.
The magic of the gods is gone, yet their valor, their greatness, survive. Survive... intertwined with Nagrul's strain.
Both flow swiftly on. Combining. Clashing. Struggling to see...
...which next will rise.

MEDIAVIEW

by Dennis O'Neil

FM: O'Neil
TO: Duffy
SUBJ: **Mediaview**

Send not the ninja, oh gentlest, kindest of editors. I *know* the deadline for #32 is upon us like **Hulk Hogan** pressing **Rowdy Roddy Piper** to the mat. Time to write the annual Summer Movie Column. Summer Movie Column *numero cinco*, on deck. Should be easy. We both know the formula I've evolved. Rhapsodize about hot sidewalks and cool Brooklyn nights and walks from the neighborhood theater. Mention a full moon? Sure, and let us not forget to nudge Greenwich Village into it somewhere. And childhood. At least half a graf on bucolic boyhood days back in ol' St. Louis. Add a bit of philosophical blarney about "authenticating the moviegoing experience" or somesuch and we've got our lead.

Then snap out those pithy reviews.

I've got a couple of problems here, with the review part. To review movies it's useful to have seen them. And I haven't. Seen the summer movies, that is. Not, anyway, the fantasy, science fiction and comics-related movies which are presumably the subject matter of the column. I have caught **Code of Silence, Witness** and **Prizzi's Honor** and liked them all, but they're thrillers, not the aforementioned s-f/fantasy/comic stuff.

James Bond flicks fall—or slip, or slide—somewhere between the thriller and s-f categories, and anyway I've discussed them before and nobody, from **Archie Goodwin** to **Mitchell B. Craig** of Lancaster, SC, has complained, so I planned to see the latest, **A View to a Kill** (this is a title?) at the Loews 34th Street Showplace the day it opened.

Then somebody told me that they were charging six bucks admission. *Six* bucks? For Bond? To watch aging Mannequin **Moore** provide set-ups for his stuntmen and hear him deliver lines that are meant to be double entendres but don't quite qualify as *half* entendres? No. This year I'll 86 a tradition stretching back to 1964 and not catch the current Bond. I'll wait for it to be available at my local videocassette renter. No, I'll wait for it to be broadcast. The Bond formula lost its charm for me five-six years ago, but as long as the ticket cost the normal amount I didn't complain—I continued to patronize the pictures from habit and because I hoped to regain the fun they once provided. But no more. Six bucks is an insult. Six bucks is an attack on the American economic system. If they charge an extra buck for Bond, they'll be charging for air next. I owe it to my grandchildren to detour wide around the Loews 34th Street Showplace.

(While I'm in the kvetching mode: do you realize that I still have to pay for movies? Am I not an accredited reviewer for a slick magazine with a hefty cover price? And do not such people get screening passes to the new films? The answer is a resounding *no*! Not if they work for **Epic**, they don't. Ink-stained specimens of heavy breatherhood who publish fanzines on hectographs get screening passes, but not the man from **Epic**. Listen, in the five years I've been laboring for you guys, only one PR person in all of New York has consistently invited **Epic** to screenings. Her name is **Roberta Burrows** and she represents **Warners-Orion** and I may just mention her in my will. As for the rest of those martini-brained, troglodytic flacks, they should do themselves a favor and not cross in front of any automobile I'm driving.)

Where was I?

Not seeing summer movies. Well, last Saturday I planned to OD on flicks, and catch **The Goonies** and **Cocoon**, but at the last minute I had a chance to go upstate, to the Catskills, and participate in an Indian purification rite called a Sweat. You're usually interested in this kind of thing, so I'll describe it for you briefly.

It was about eleven at night. We walked through woods down a steep candle-lit path toward a clearing at the side of a stream. From a considerable distance away, we could see a large fire and a large round tent—a sweat lodge, we learned later. Once there, we saw that the fire was full of stones heated to white glow. Someone began playing drums as we shed our clothes and a couple of men removed stones from the flames with a pitchfork and a shovel and pushed them inside the lodge. We crawled on hands and knees through a low entrance to the lodge and sat cross-legged with people already inside around a pit filled with the stones. It was warm, and the air was scented with fragrant herbs.

A rangy, muscular man named **Thaddeus** entered with a tub of water and explained the ritual: We were to observe a minute of silence and then, whenever we felt the urge to do it, speak aloud a prayer or an invocation or a plea addressed to whatever god or spirit we believed in. When a speaker finished, the rest of us were to acknowledge what had been spoken with a chanted yell.

Thaddeus flung water on the stones. They hissed and steamed and the temperature rose. Again. Again. And again.

"I want to ask the spirits to put thoughts of peace and love and respect for this beautiful planet in the minds of the leaders," someone said and we replied: *How-WEE-oh!*

Water on stones. The lodge grew hotter.

A woman: "I want to pray for a 14-year-old girl, Sherry. She's so unhappy, she tried to commit suicide twice."

Hoe-WEE-oh!

Hotter.

A man: "I want to thank the spirits for shaping my life, for bringing me here to share this with everyone."

Hoe-WE-oh!

Hotter. Unbearably hot.

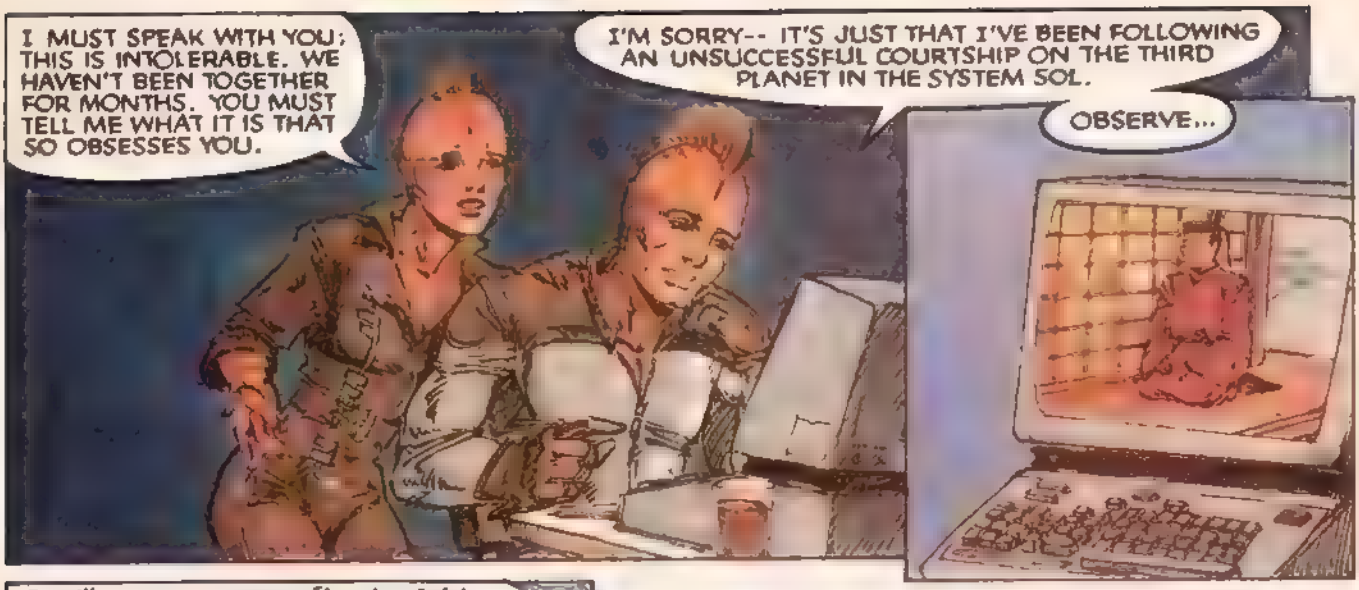
"Sometimes," **Thaddeus** said, "when you think you can't stand it any longer, when you think you're dying, that's when you break through..."

The hissing and the steam and the scratch of grass under my legs and the words—the desperate, joyous and exultant words—and the presence of these naked strangers became part of a single moment, at once anguished and tranquil, that I was seeping into and through. I lay my cheek against the ground and felt the cool of the earth and smelled the musk of the rich black soil and then **Thaddeus** was leading us out, running, bare feet over rocks, to the stream. We plunged in and, stung and numbed by the sudden cold, we shrieked. Shivering, we clambered back onto the bank and marveled at the white vapor rising from our flesh

We went slowly to the fire and, stirring, shifting, murmuring, we warned ourselves. I allowed myself to look at my fellow sharers and felt a huge, undifferentiated affection for all of them.

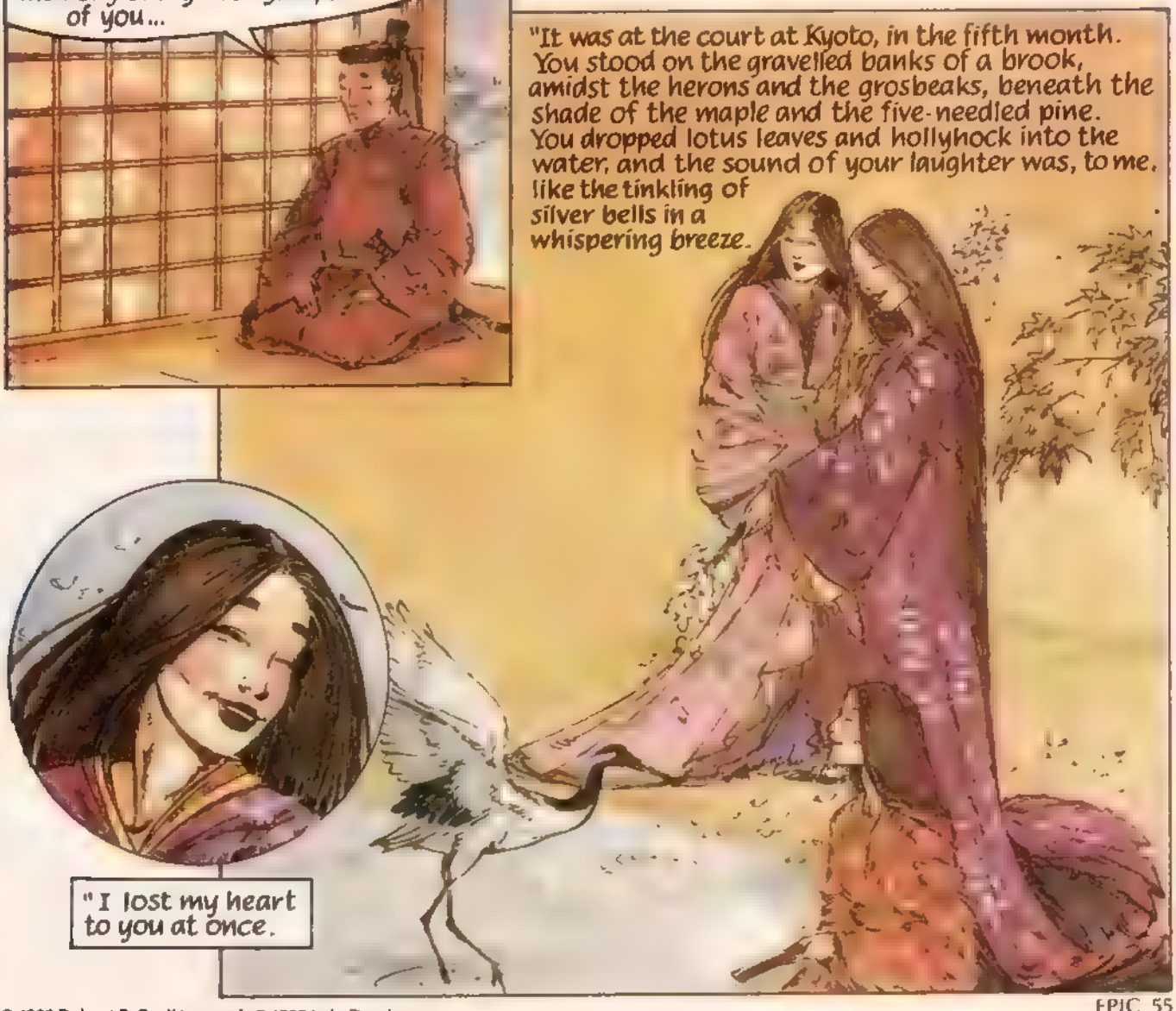
Eventually, we put on our clothes, gathered our belongings and moved up the path, away from the fire and the lodge, but not away from the experience, at least not for a while.

A night like that is worth a hundred movie columns.


I MUST SPEAK WITH YOU; THIS IS INTOLERABLE. WE HAVEN'T BEEN TOGETHER FOR MONTHS. YOU MUST TELL ME WHAT IT IS THAT SO OBSESSES YOU.
I'M SORRY-- IT'S JUST THAT I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING AN UNSUCCESSFUL COURTSHIP ON THE THIRD PLANET IN THE SYSTEM SOL.
OBSERVE...

love's labours

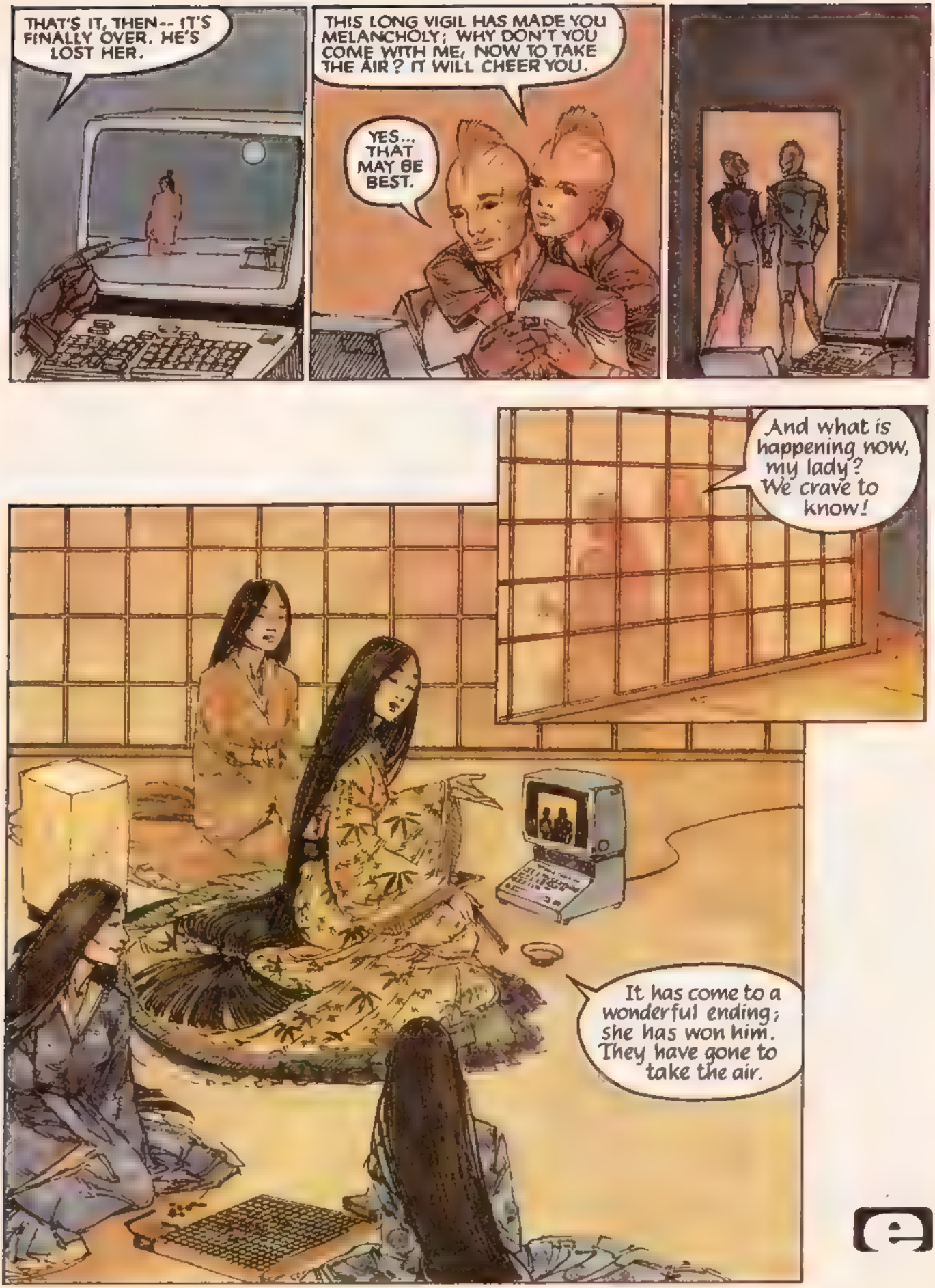
I will come no more after tonight; I have tried my utmost to win your love, and have failed in every attempt. And yet, I will always cherish the memory of my first glimpse of you...

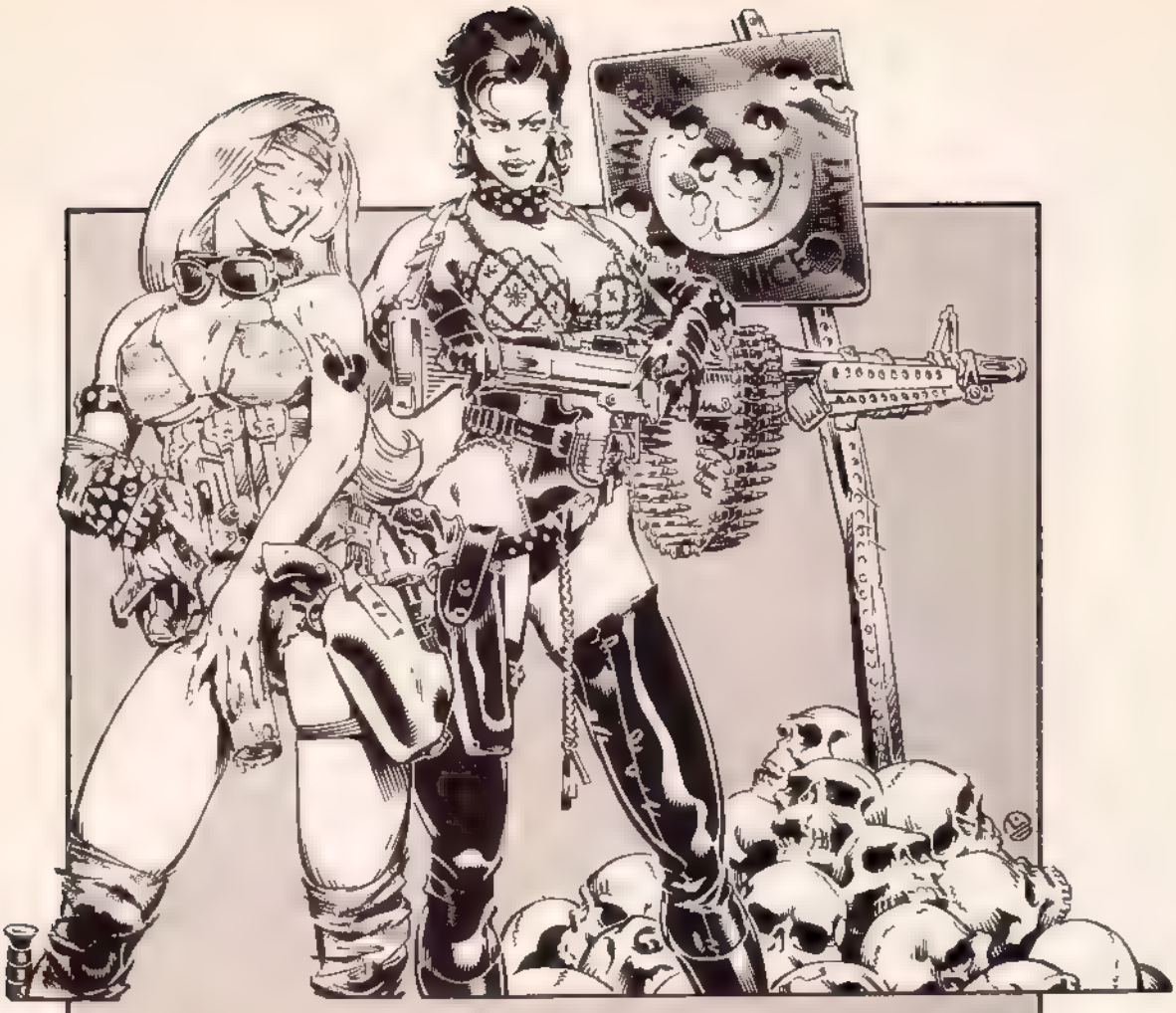

"It was at the court at Kyoto, in the fifth month. You stood on the gravelled banks of a brook, amidst the herons and the grosbeaks, beneath the shade of the maple and the five-needled pine. You dropped lotus leaves and hollyhock into the water, and the sound of your laughter was, to me, like the tinkling of silver bells in a whispering breeze.
"I lost my heart to you at once.

story © 1985 Robert E. Rodi/artwork © 1985 Lela Dowling

But now it is the tenth month. I have followed you to your country house and sat in daily attendance upon your hidden beauty.
My bright robes are dull with the wear of the sun, and the only reply to my ardor has been the constant sound of maiden-ish laughter, and of go stones being dropped into their boxes.
"My gift of duck eggs and a rosary of rock crystal still lie at your door, unaccepted.
I am as solitary as my lonely companions, the willow and the camphor. My inkstick is blunt with the exertion of my verses. Yet shall I offer you one last couplet...
I have traveled the way of love and dampened my sleeves;
Now I go yet further into the muddy fields, alone.

He follows the tracks of a lady who visits another world;
Alas, the road will be muddy and long.


THAT'S IT, THEN-- IT'S FINALLY OVER. HE'S LOST HER.
THIS LONG VIGIL HAS MADE YOU MELANCHOLY; WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH ME, NOW TO TAKE THE AIR? IT WILL CHEER YOU.
YES... THAT MAY BE BEST.
And what is happening now, my lady? We crave to know!
It has come to a wonderful ending; she has won him. They have gone to take the air.



article

SAVAGE REBIRTH

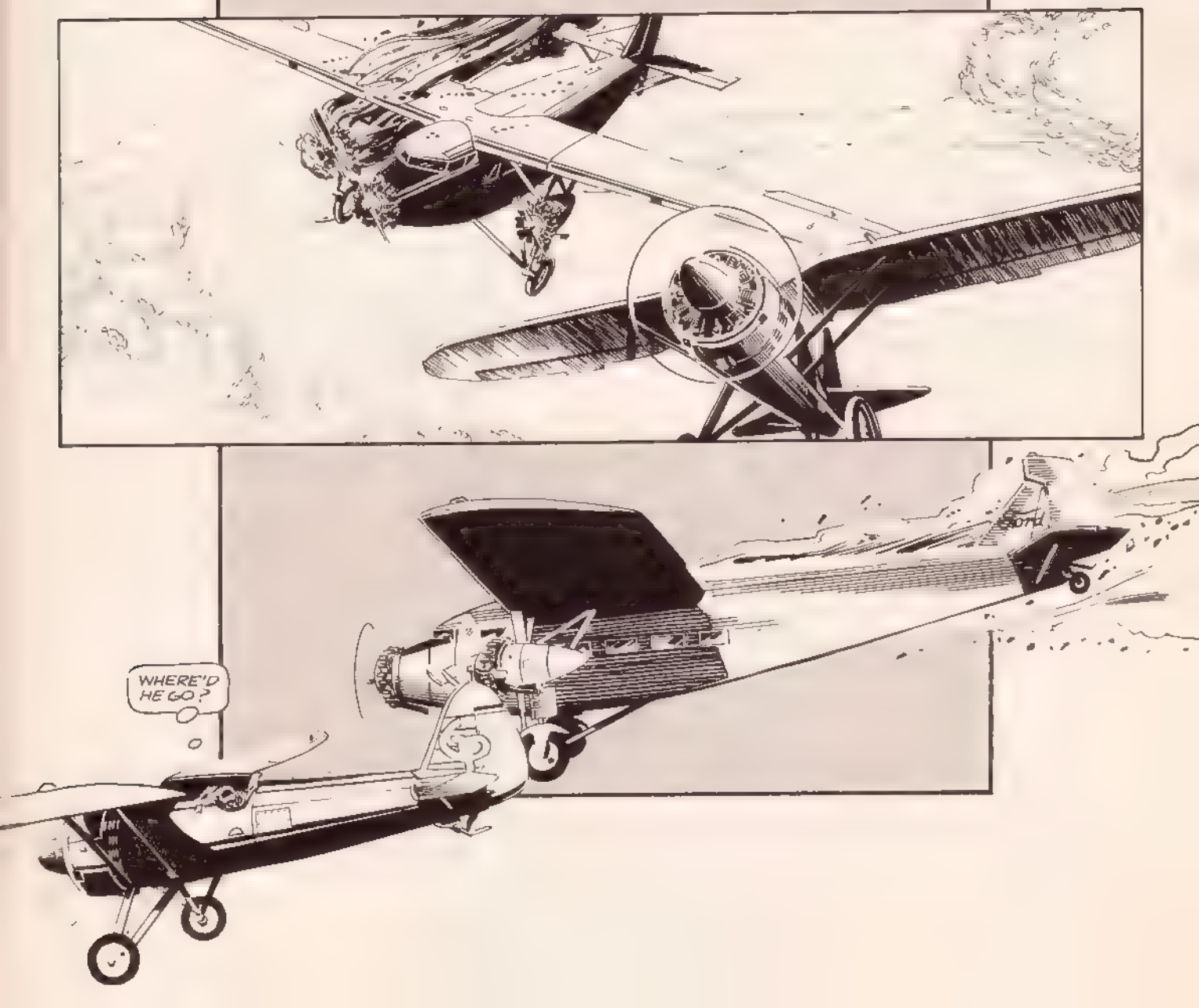
One of Marvel's earliest ventures in deluxe style comics in magazine form was *Savage Tales*. From its first issue, there was a heavy emphasis on fantasy material, not surprising since its lead feature was Robert E. Howard's *Conan*. Though done in a black-and-white format, *Savage Tales* was certainly a forerunner of *Epic Illustrated*.

© 1985 Marvel Comics Group

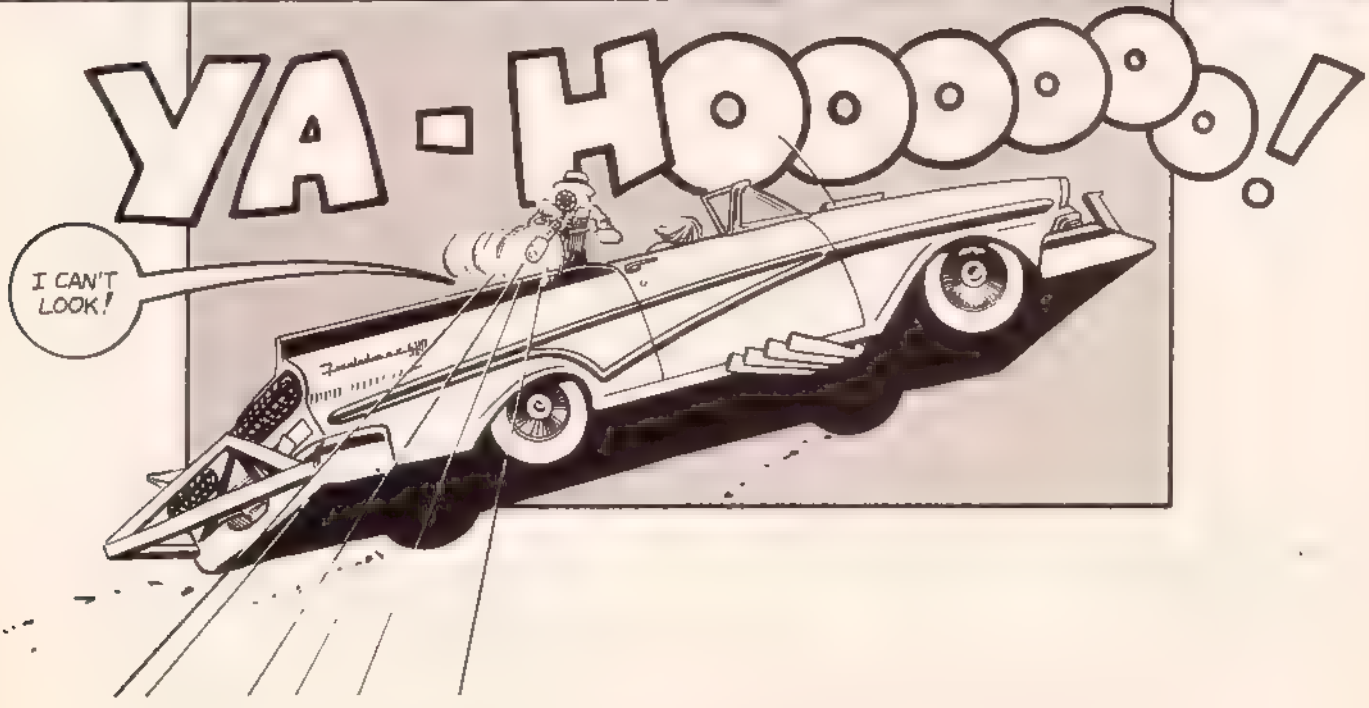
Eventually, Howard's sword-and-sorcery hero proved popular enough to be given his own separate magazine, *The Savage Sword of Conan* (still being published and probably more popular than ever). *Savage Tales* lasted for some time with other lead characters but gradually waned and was discontinued.

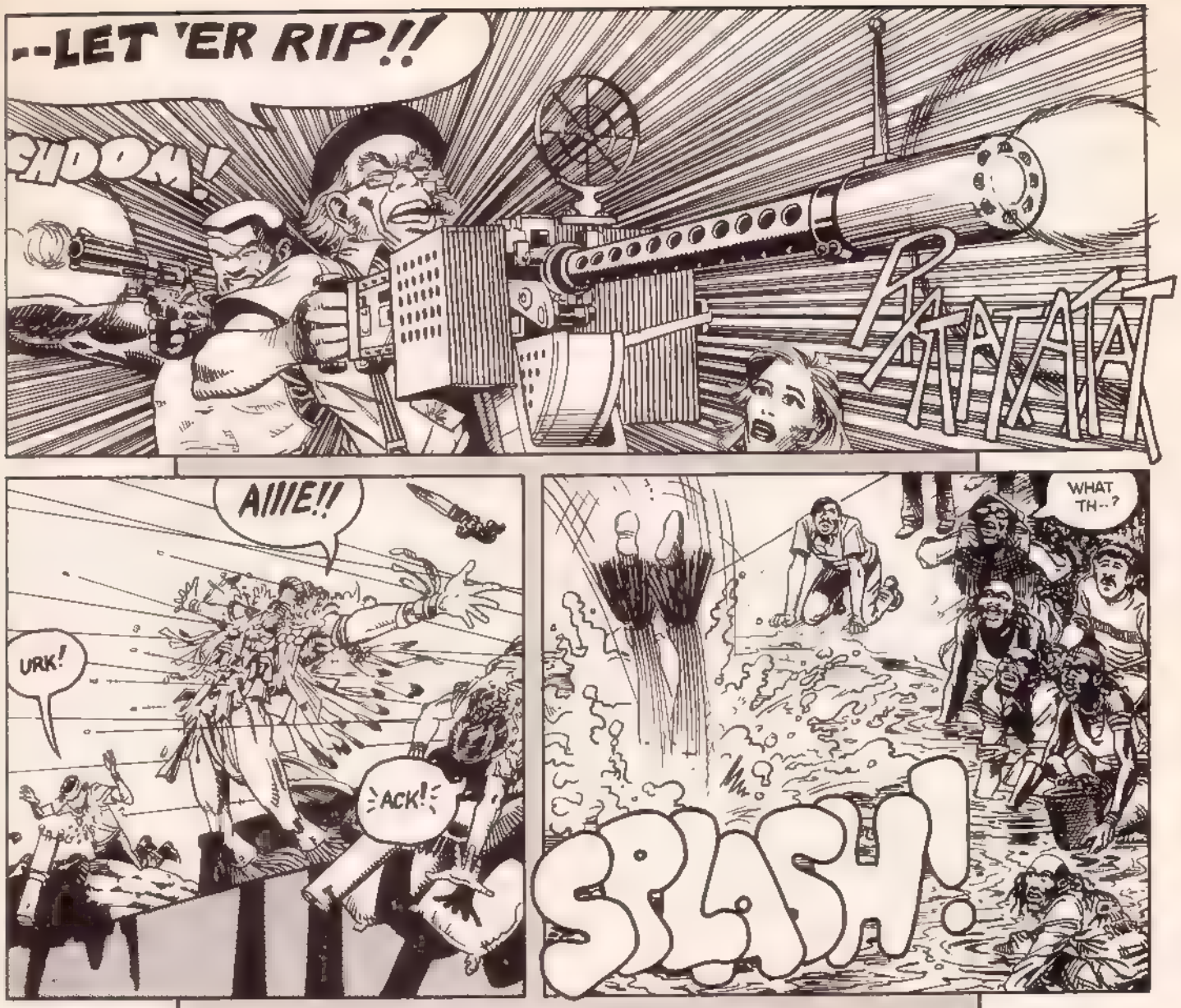
Now, Larry Hama, *Savage Sword's* current editor, is reviving the title. The original black-and-white format is being retained, but the editorial approach is entirely new. The emphasis will be on hard-hitting action stories set in a wide variety of locales, past, present, and—of particular interest to *Epic* readers — future.

Contributors lined up for *Savage Tales* include Russ Heath, Ralph Reese, Val Mayerik, Archie Goodwin, and Michael Golden (represented here by the illustration on the article's opening page). They are producing stories they couldn't do elsewhere and producing some of their finest work because of it. Herb Trimpe—already well known for his *Incredible Hulk* and *Phantom Eagle*—is winning new fans with *Sky Warriors* (this and opposite page), an on-going series about inhabitants of a secret airdrome struggling after a nuclear war.



A post-apocalyptic setting is also the background for *Blood and Gutz*, another continuing series. This one is written and drawn by Will Jungkuntz, a young talent who comes to comics from the commerical art-field.





Blood and Guts (on these two pages) takes place in Los Angeles of the not too distant future when each section of the city is an armed camp, many complete with walls and machine gun emplacements. Its main characters are an unlikely pair of survivors trying to win the battle to stay alive.

But the book is by no means only fantasy adventure. There are stories of modern day urban action and ones set in the recent past, such as *Fifth of the First*, written by Vietnam veteran Doug Murray and drawn by Mike Golden, which conveys the point of view of a foot soldier in the closing days of the Vietnamese war. And, *Savage Tales* revives the long-neglected western.

In the Fifties, one of the best western comic books ever was *American Eagle*. Working with writer Colin Dawkins and inker Bill Elder, John Severin gave the strip a vision of integrity and authenticity. The veteran artist is back doing the same thing with the genre once more.

Shown on this spread are scenes from *The Long Ride Home* and *Pistolero*, two current works by Severin, demonstrating not only his gift for period detail and realistic action, but his feeling and flair for getting the most from the black-and-white medium.

The first issue of *Savage Tales* is already on the newsstands, the second will be available next month. When it appeared in its earlier incarnation in the Seventies, the book was a pioneer. Now, with its wide-ranging and free-wheeling new format, the magazine is not only back, it's pioneering again.

THE SURPRISE IN THE BOX IS
TOAST POSTIES
TOAST POSTIES
DADDY? DO YOU WORK FOR SUPERMAN?
MASON'S SUPERMARKET
OPEN ALL NIGHT!
?
MY MOTHER IS RIGHT-I'M REALLY OUT OF TOUCH WITH BEING A KID!
DADDY?
GORDON?
DON'T IGNORE HIM LIKE THAT.
JOYCE!
I'M NOT IGNORING HIM. I BET YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT EITHER!
I'LL CALL LATER--
I'LL BE HERE IN THE MORNING.
by MARK WHEATLEY COPYRIGHT ©1985
LETTERED BY KATHRYN L. MAYER

MR. MARKHAM HAD TO LEAVE AT 8:00. SOMETHING ABOUT AN EMERGENCY.
I BET! AND HE LEFT ME WITH ALL HIS PAPER WORK!
I SURE WISH I WORKED FOR SUPERMAN!
HUH?
OH- JUST SOMETHING MY KID SAID-
WHEN JOYCE DROPPED ME OFF TONIGHT BARRY ASKED IF I WORKED FOR SUPERMAN.
HA!
THAT'S PRETTY SHARP FOR A LITTLE KID!
SUPERMAN?

THE HOUR SLOWLY APPROACHED MIDNIGHT AS GORDON WADED THROUGH THE PILED-UP WORK. PEACE AND QUIET IS AN ALL NIGHT MARKET ON A SNOWY THURSDAY. LESS THAN HALF A DOZEN POOLS HAD BRAVED THE ELEMENTS TO SHOP. BUT AT LEAST ONE OF THEM THOUGHT BUTCHERS SHOULD WORK ALL NIGHT.

RING!
LAY OFF OF IT, LADY--HE'S HOME IN BED!
GORDON TRIED TO IGNORE THE BUTCHER'S BELL AS HE PLOWED THROUGH THE MAIL.
AH!
A CEREAL GIVE-AWAY! SOMETHING I CAN BRING HOME TO BARRY--
WITH ALL THE TAXES AND REGULATIONS IN THIS STATE - IT'S THE ONLY WAY HE'LL GET IT, TOO!

GORDON SLID THE RING ON HIS FINGER AND FLIPPED THROUGH THE BOOK OF INCANTATIONS.
'AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT-- BLA-BLA-BLA-DARK OF EVE, DEATH, DISEASE, DEMON, POX AND FEAR.'
RING!
RING!
'COME THE CREATURES OF SHADE AND SHADOW DO DEEDS IN TRADE FOR ONE HELD DEAR...'
RING!
RING!
WHAT A RIP-OFF. NOTHING... NOT EVEN A TINGLE.
OH RING- STOP THAT BELL!
RING
EEEEAGH!
WHAT THE BLUE BLAZES!?
GORDON RAN TO THE MEAT COUNTER ONLY TO FIND--
HELLO, GORDON-- I THINK YOU SHOULD HAVE A SPECIAL ON FRESH MEAT!

PUT MRS. MELBA'S ENTRAILS DOWN OR I'M CALLING THE POLICE!
!
FINE!
MEANWHILE I'LL HAVE THE STOCKBOY. AND WHILE YOU'RE ON THE PHONE, CALL JOYCE AND HAVE HER BRING BARRY--
UNGH!
SPLUNK
GORDON RAN-
THE YOUNGER THEY ARE --THE BETTER I LIKE 'EM!
AND HE KEPT RUNNING AFTER HE GOT THE SHOTGUN FROM THE OFFICE. HE RAN TOWARD THE SOUND OF CONFLICT--
GOD! WHAT A MESS! BLOOD! THAT THING IS DRAGGING SOME -- BODY!
AISLE TEN WAS A DRIPPING SEA OF SODA POP AND BLOOD!
GIVE ME BARRY- THIS MEAT'S TOO OLD!
I'LL GIVE YOU SOME MEAT!
YOURS!
BLAM!

THE FIRST SPRAY OF BUCK-SHOT TURNED TO RATS.
BAM!
THE NEXT SHOT BECAME A RAIN OF MAGGOTS.
YOU'RE GOING ABOUT THIS ALL WRONG-GORDON!
THE THING'S VOICE BEGAN TO CRAWL OUT OF THE DARK, GRAVELY PIT, UP THE SCALE, GAINING A SMOOTHER TONE UNTIL IT WAS JOYCE SPEAKING-
BRING ME BARRY, PLEASE DEAR - I'D LOVE TO HAVE HIM HERE.
AND ON AND ON- THE OBSCENE REQUEST REPEATED-
BEAUTIFUL YOU!
GORDON RAN-- HE HAD NO INTENTION OF COMING BACK.
PEOPLE CONTINUED TO DIE. THINGS BURNED- THE MUZAK DEVELOPED ODD, OBSCENE LYRICS.
BUT IT ALL SEEMED DISTANT TO GORDON. IT NEVER QUITE TOUCHED HIM BECAUSE HE REFUSED TO BELIEVE IT.
INSTEAD HE FOUND A BOX OF TOAST POSTIES AND BEGAN TO EAT THE CEREAL DRY FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HE WAS A KID.
WHAT DAY WAS IT THAT I STOPPED DOING THE THINGS I DID AS A KID?
OH GEEZ - I WAS SUPPOSED TO CALL JOYCE! AND BARRY WAS UPSET... BECAUSE DADDY IS A STUPID ADULT!
MAYBE IF I FEED HIM TOAST POSTIES- EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT...
EEEEEEEEEEE!
CEREAL'S A UTOPIAN FOOD. I READ THAT! DEVELOPED IN BATTLE CREEK.
RUNCH CHRCH
CRUNCH
AH! NO!
S'POSED TO SUPRESS THAT OL' NASTY SEX DRIVE!
HELP!

BUT THE BEST THING ABOUT CEREAL IS READIN' THE BOX -- ALL SORTS OF GAMES, CHEMICALS, PRESERVATIVES AND DISCLAIMERS.
DISCLAIMERS!!
SURPRISE INSIDE
SPECIAL OFFER
GORDON FOUND THE THING IN FRESH PRODUCE.
♪♪ TIP-TOE THROUGH THE TULIPS -- ♪♪
THROUGH THE GARDEN--
THING!
WHAT?! WHERE'S BARRY?
FORGET HIM! YOU'RE THROUGH HERE!
OH NO! WE HAVE A BARGAIN!
I DID THE DEED- NOW YOU OWE ME SOMEONE DEAR-
SORRY- NO- READ THE FINE PRINT!
FINE PRINT?
YEAH! RIGHT WHERE IT SAYS, "VOID WHERE-EVER TAXED, REGULATED, OR PROHIBITED BY LAW!"

GUESS WHAT--
THIS STATE LOVES TO PROHIBIT, TAX AND REGULATE.
YOU'RE VOID!
RATS!
BEANS!
RATS! BEANS! WORMS!
I'M VOID!!
A FRIGID WIND SWEPT THROUGH THE STORE--
AND THEN--

EVERYTHING WAS AS IT HAD BEEN BEFORE --
RING!
HI
HR
WOW! I REALLY DOZED OFF -- IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT.
I GOTTA CALL HOME!
HI, BABE! IS BARRY ASLEEP?
UH-HUMM- SO WAS I -- NOTHING ON TV.
WELL-I FIGURED OUT WHAT BARRY WAS TALKING ABOUT -- THAT SUPERMAN STUFF. I JUST HAD TO THINK LIKE A KID!
MUST'VE BEEN TOUGH!
SUPERMAN EQUALS MASON'S SUPER-MARKET!
I DON'T KNOW 'BOUT THIS GIVE-AWAY--
OUCH! YOU WOKE ME UP FOR THAT?
KISS THE KID FOR ME. SEE YA.
HUMMMM- LOVE-
HUMPH!
WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT SECRET DECODER RINGS?
DEMONS AND BLOOD-
CRUNCH!
THAT'S SICK STUFF!
CLUNK!

what is going on in the strip, (it was on the second-last page that I finally realized who **Toadswart** actually was), and I will follow it in the future. It was described: A Gothic Tale of Horror and Magick on the first page...I hope we see more horror in the future, as it is my favorite comic genre.

But I think my favorite story in the entire magazine had to be **The Fix,** which was this issue's only horror story, if it had one. The hideous monsters on the last couple of pages were beautifully drawn, and it had one of the best surprise endings I've read in a long time.

Thanks for a very enjoyable first issue, and I should be buying **Epic Illustrated** for a long time to come. Please try to get **Berni Wrightson** to do some stories for you. I noticed a horror strip of his in an issue a while back.

Phillip Ernest
New Liskeard, Ontario
Canada

We'd love to have *Berni* do some more work for us, *Phillip.* In fact, we almost certainly will. These days, he's keeping pretty busy, though...working on not one, but two graphic novels, starring Spider-Man and The Incredible Hulk, respectively. Both are pretty wild, because they give *Berni* a chance to work with major Marvel characters...and still indulge his flair for the macabre!

Dear Stan and Archie,

I have just began reading **Epic** and am very pleased with the tremendous artwork and stories within. I am a closet artist but not really in comparison to your artists' abilities, although I wish someday to be one. I have just subscribed to **Epic** and am looking forward to receiving them monthly.

I am currently in West Germany for a four year tour with my husband. He is in the U.S. Air Force. I was also but now am a civilian again. And while I was looking for a good magazine to read in the Stars and Stripes bookstore I stumbled upon **Epic Illustrated** and was delighted at what I found. It was an incredibly good magazine, and I am now an addicted fan.

Cindy Groboski
Soabgdahlem, West Germany

Glad to hear it, *Cindy.* We'll try never to let you down.

Dear Stan and Archie,

Your magazine is greatly appreciated by us here at the **Game Masters Guild.** We really enjoy your fine artwork. We are a club for the player and Games Masters of **TSR** role playing games. Ever since **TSR** published its **Marvel Superheroes Role Playing Game,** our club members have been paying extra special attention to **Epic Illustrated,** because it is edited and published by our hero, **Marvel Comics.**

Please keep up the MARVELous work. If any one is interested in our gaming club, write to:

Game Masters Guild
309 Arrow Wood
Lake Jackson, TX 77566

Flattery will get you everywhere, O *Masters.*

Dear Stan and Archie,

I've been looking over some of your letters, and one letter in issue #31, on the last page asked if you will go monthly. I liked what you said about not doing it because you're busy with all this other stuff but the reason I'm writing is I want to see more of your Graphic Novel previews, like **The Raven Banner** in issue #30. I also like the little skits with **Cerebus.** Also, I was wondering if your **Epic** books like **Swords of the Swashbucklers** and **Starstruck** are going to have annuals or not at any time soon?

I love **Moonshadow** too. I also have one question: Why are all of your books bi-monthly?

Bubba Morris
Teague, TX

Not all of them are, *Bubba. Six from Sirius II, The Black Dragon, Groo the Wanderer,* and *Elfquest,* to name just a few, come out on a monthly basis. The reason that so many of the others come out bi-monthly is that *Epic* comics have more story pages per issue than most other comics, and our creators feel they need the additional time to do a good job.

Dear Stan and Archie,

Re: **Epic Illustrated, No. 31,** August 1985

A hat full of kudos to the staff of **Epic Illustrated** and the contributors to issue #31.

Archie Goodwin's "hero" of the story was the so-misunderstood villain. So often do the readers ignore the villain's importance. Perhaps it was a theater class I took or simply a more extensive circle of experience which comes with added years, I find too many television shows, movies and books, both graphic or non-graphic, are too predictable. How little enjoyment can one derive from those so-called entertainments in which you can paraphrase the dialogue/action during the first viewing? Thanks, **Archie,** for the unpredictability.

Now that **Cobalt 60** is finished (a logical ending that leaves one wryly smiling as the effect of **Cobalt 60's** reign on the despised Radio people comes to mind). I suggest that the several issue epics be held to **Toadswart** and **The Last Galactus Story.** So far both are shaping up into interesting stories, but I'm withholding my final opinion.

Paty Cockrum's The Sword of Sh'rlii recalled the joy I had when **Wendy** and **Richard Pini's Elfquest #1** first crossed my hands. I truly hope that the adventures of Elelowyn/Sh'rlii and Sergi (the one who appealed to me immediately with the Eye of Horus and healer's profession) will see publication. Perhaps even as a graphic novel. I hesitate to suggest a limited series since the incredible coloring will surely suffer.

Jon Muth's story took several readings before I understood most of the implications (I think). **Wah, Wah, Wah** was simply strange while I'm surprised that **David (Year 20)** had not lost his sanity much earlier. As I already buy **The Black Dragon** limited series, the preview was irrelevant to me, but I enjoyed the panels from future issues.

Overall, an enjoyable issue, and there have been disappointing ones in the past. Undoubtedly I'll stay with you for many more issues.

Bonnie Forman
Syracuse, NY

Thanks, *Bonnie,* that's good to know.

If you have letters or comments you'd like to see in these pages, address them to:

FEEDBACK
Epic Illustrated
c/o Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

TOADSWART

SYNOPSIS

In the year 982 A.D., from a lonely cell, the dwarf Toadswart, retainer of Castle Amplestone, contemplates the downfall of the only world he has known.

It commenced with the mysterious disappearance of the castle's old Lord. This affected his heir and regent, Prince Waxwroth. Suspecting the King of the First Dominion of treacherous designs upon Amplestone province, Waxwroth evoked Dark Forces to give life to a hideous creation...the Golem.

Then, the King's army suddenly arrived, proof to Waxwroth that someone within Amplestone had betrayed him. Not long after, Rupert, Waxwroth's young son—whose investiture would have validated Waxwroth as reigning Lord of Amplestone—went plunging to his doom from the castle's clock tower.

Believing Lacknose, the old Lord's astrologer, to be the spy responsible for all that had gone so tragically wrong, Waxwroth seized the aged magician and tortured him to confess. Instead, Lacknose died. This moved Toadswart and the Prince's counselor, Bitterburr, to rebellion. But, attempting to crush Waxwroth's Golem, they failed. Bitterburr fell victim to their own trap and Toadswart was imprisoned by the now mad Waxwroth, who used his sorcerous powers to loose plague and sickness upon Amplestone.

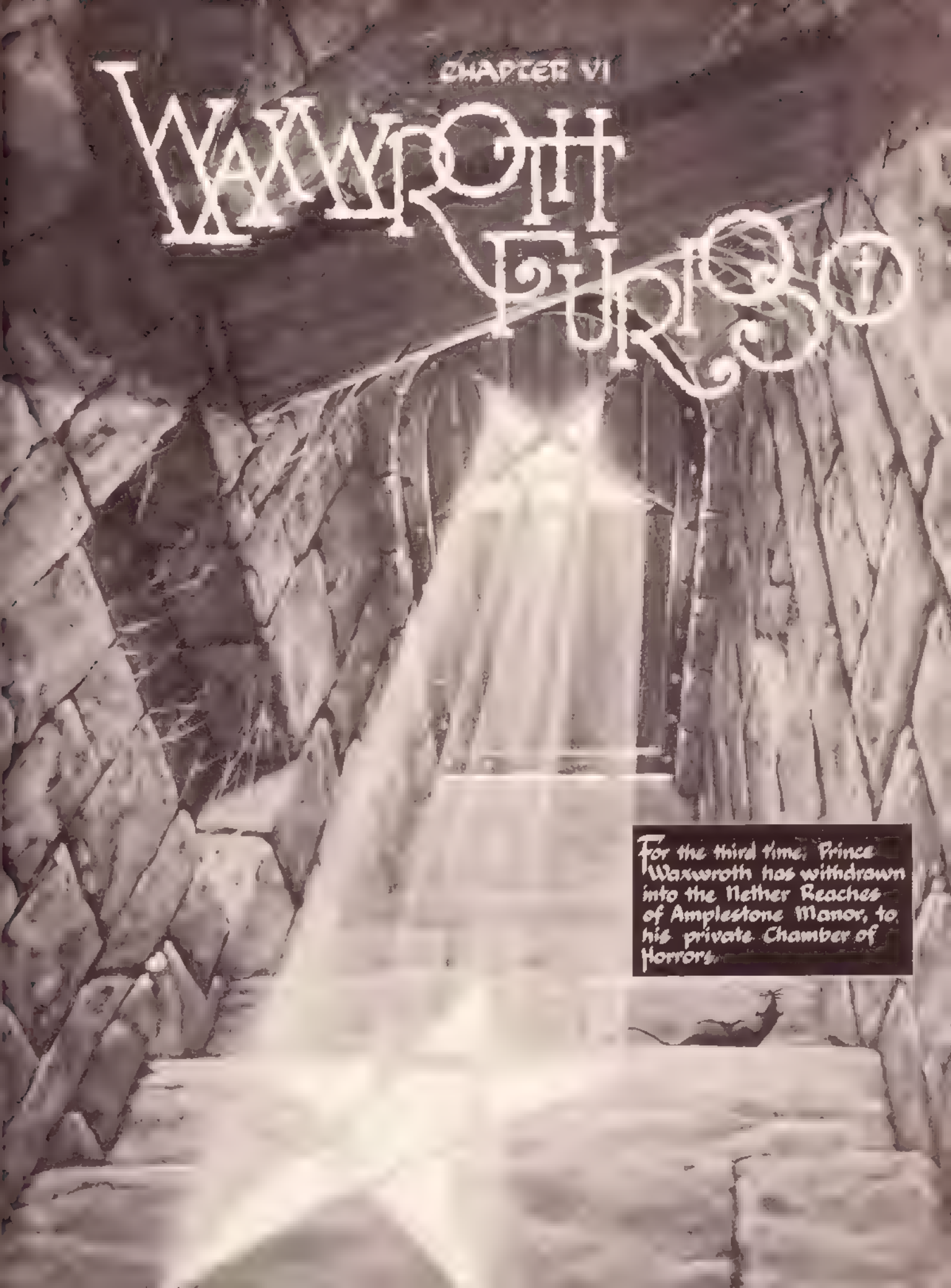
Now, within his cell, Toadswart's contemplation of the Past ends... and the Final Horror begins.

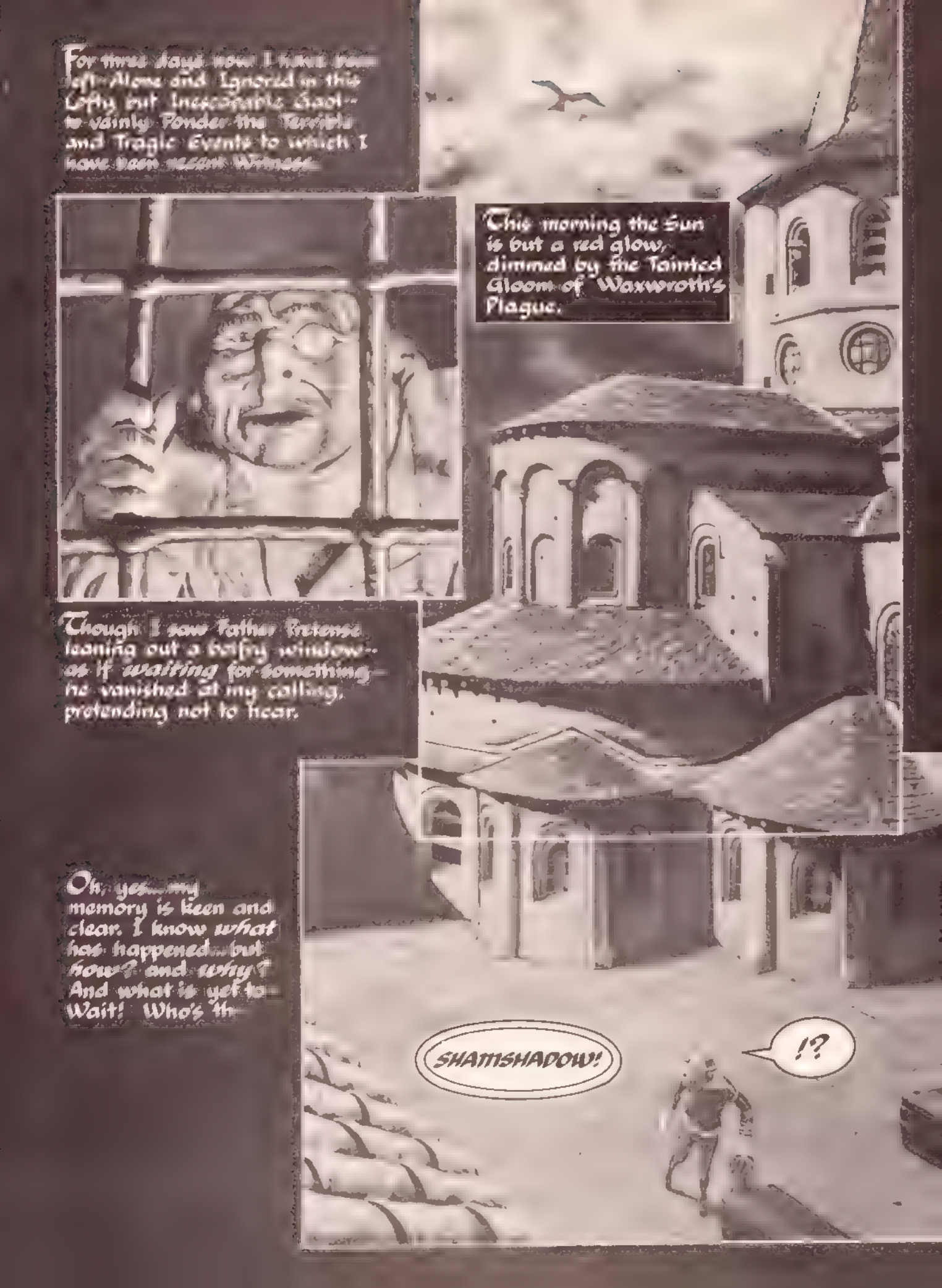
d'AMPLESTONE

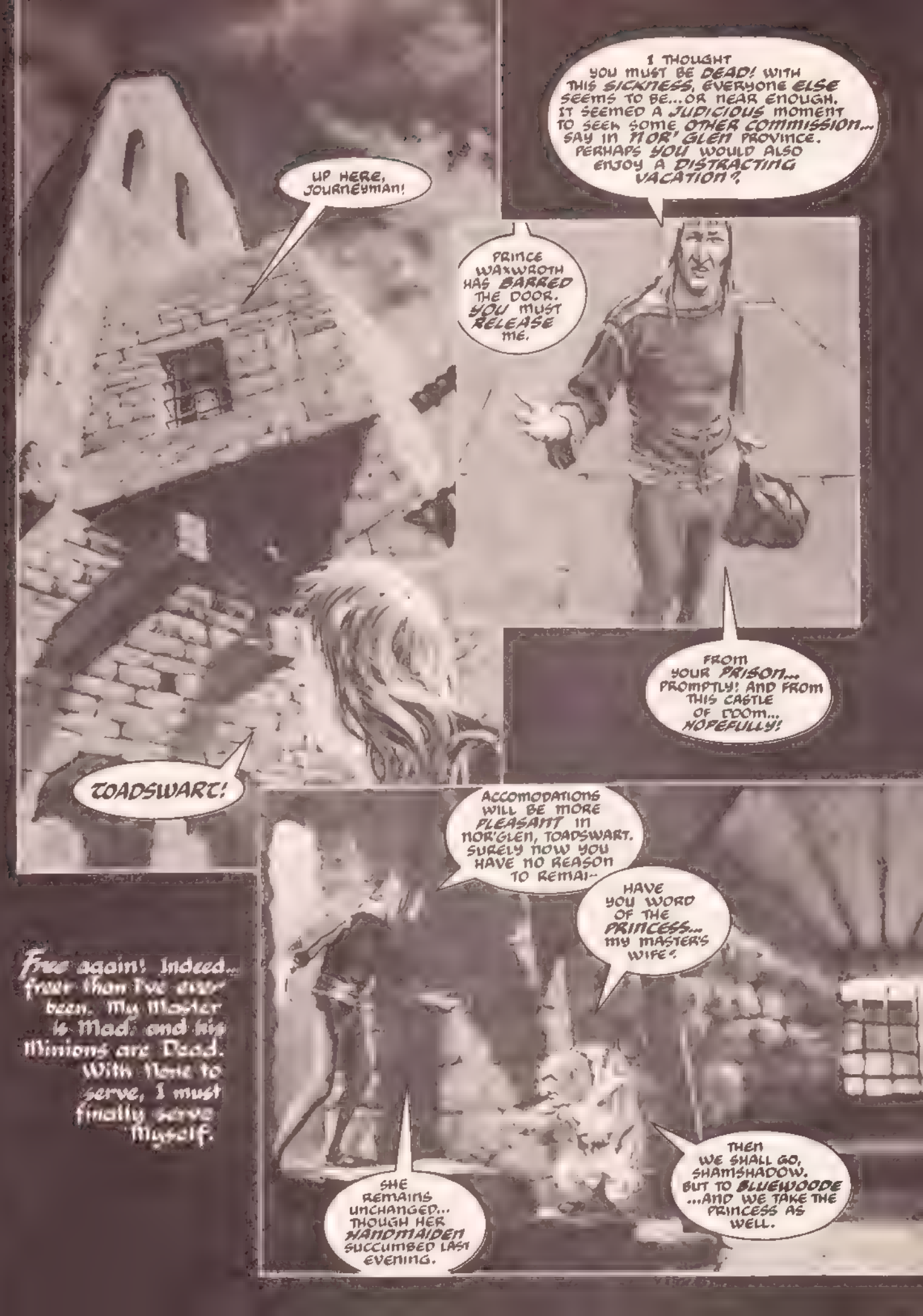
A·GOTHIC·TALE·of·HORROR·&·MAGICK

BY·TIM·A·CONRAD

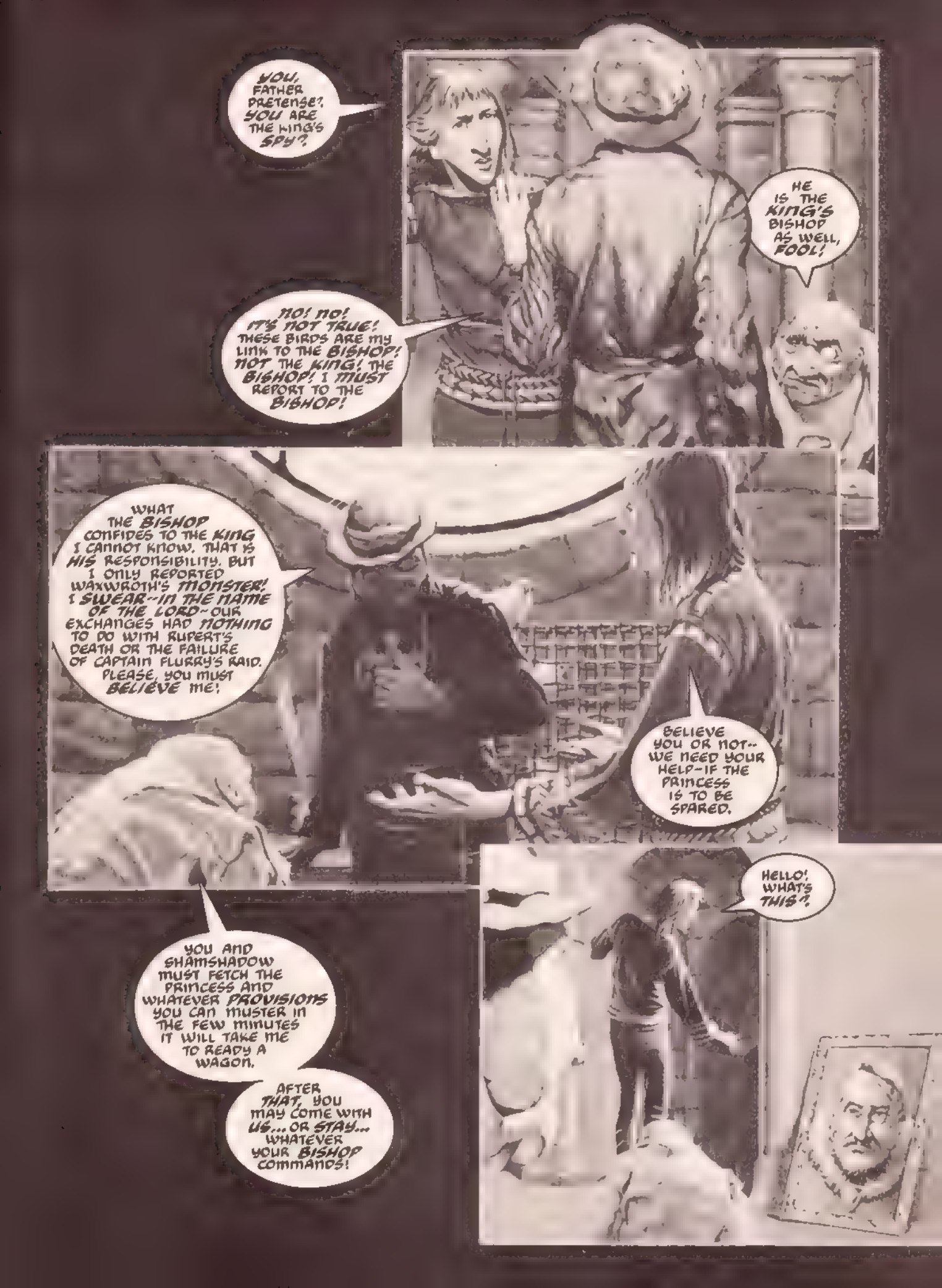
© 1985 Tim Conrad

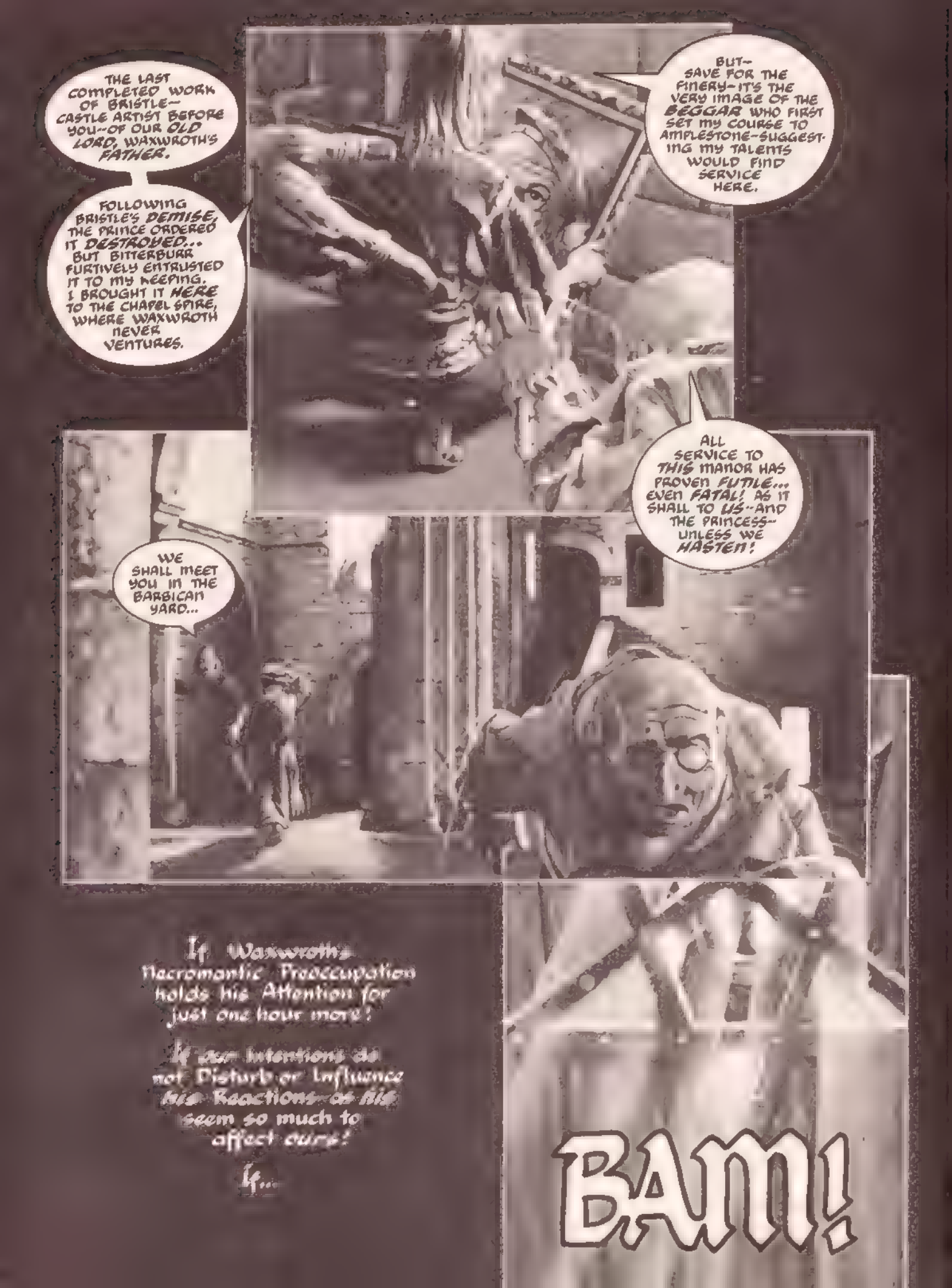

CHAPTER VI
WAXWROTH'S FURIES
For the third time, Prince Waxwroth has withdrawn into the Nether Reaches of Amplestone Manor, to his private Chamber of Horrors.


For three days now I have been left Alone and Ignored in this Lofty but Inescapable Gaol— to vainly Ponder the Terrible and Tragic Events to which I have been meant Witness.
This morning the Sun is but a red glow, dimmed by the Tainted Gloom of Waxworth's Plague.
Though I saw Father Pretense leaning out a belfry window— as if waiting for something— he vanished at my calling, pretending not to hear.
Oh, yes... my memory is keen and clear. I know what has happened... but how? and why? And what is yet to— Wait! Who's th—
SHAMSHADOW!
!?


I THOUGHT YOU MUST BE DEAD! WITH THIS SICKNESS, EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS TO BE...OR NEAR ENOUGH. IT SEEMED A JUDICIOUS MOMENT TO SEEK SOME OTHER COMMISSION... SAY IN NOR'GLEN PROVINCE. PERHAPS YOU WOULD ALSO ENJOY A DISTRACTING VACATION?
UP HERE, JOURNEYMAN!
PRINCE WAXWROTH HAS BARRED THE DOOR. YOU MUST RELEASE ME.
FROM YOUR PRISON... PROMPTLY! AND FROM THIS CASTLE OF DOOM... HOPEFULLY!
TOADSWART!
ACCOMODATIONS WILL BE MORE PLEASANT IN NOR'GLEN, TOADSWART. SURELY NOW YOU HAVE NO REASON TO REMAI--
HAVE YOU WORD OF THE PRINCESS... my MASTER'S WIFE?
Free again! Indeed... freer than I've ever been. My Master is Mad, and his Minions are Dead. With None to serve, I must finally serve Myself.
SHE REMAINS UNCHANGED... THOUGH HER HANDMAIDEN SUCCUMBED LAST EVENING.
THEN WE SHALL GO, SHAMSHADOW. BUT TO BLUEWOODE ...AND WE TAKE THE PRINCESS AS WELL.

I FEAR WE SHALL REQUIRE ASSISTANCE, MY SMALL FRIEND, IF WE ARE TO MAKE A TIMELY ADIEU.
THERE IS ONE OTHER REMAINING IN THE MANOR WHOSE AID WE MUST ENLIST...BE HE WILLING OR NO!
And quickly! Who knows when the Mad Prince shall Rise Again... and with what New Horror!
FATHER PRETENSE! PLEASE, YOU MU-
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
CARRIER PIGEONS! Is this, then, Amplestone's Betrayer?!


YOU, FATHER PRETENSE?. YOU ARE THE KING'S SPY?.
HE IS THE KING'S BISHOP AS WELL, FOOL!
NO! NO! IT'S NOT TRUE! THESE BIRDS ARE MY LINK TO THE BISHOP! NOT THE KING! THE BISHOP! I MUST REPORT TO THE BISHOP!
WHAT THE BISHOP CONFIDES TO THE KING I CANNOT KNOW. THAT IS HIS RESPONSIBILITY. BUT I ONLY REPORTED WAXWROTH'S MONSTER! I SWEAR--IN THE NAME OF THE LORD--OUR EXCHANGES HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH RUPERT'S DEATH OR THE FAILURE OF CAPTAIN FLURRY'S RAID. PLEASE, YOU MUST BELIEVE ME!
BELIEVE YOU OR NOT-- WE NEED YOUR HELP--IF THE PRINCESS IS TO BE SPARED.
HELLO! WHAT'S THIS?.
YOU AND SHAMSHADOW MUST FETCH THE PRINCESS AND WHATEVER PROVISIONS YOU CAN MUSTER IN THE FEW MINUTES IT WILL TAKE ME TO READY A WAGON.
AFTER THAT, YOU MAY COME WITH US... OR STAY... WHATEVER YOUR BISHOP COMMANDS!


THE LAST COMPLETED WORK OF BRISTLE—CASTLE ARTIST BEFORE YOU—OF OUR OLD LORD, WAXWROTH'S FATHER.
FOLLOWING BRISTLE'S DEMISE, THE PRINCE ORDERED IT DESTROYED... BUT BITTERBURR FURTIVELY ENTRUSTED IT TO MY KEEPING. I BROUGHT IT HERE TO THE CHAPEL SPIRE, WHERE WAXWROTH NEVER VENTURES.
BUT— SAVE FOR THE FINERY—IT'S THE VERY IMAGE OF THE BEGGAR WHO FIRST SET MY COURSE TO AMPLESTONE—SUGGESTING MY TALENTS WOULD FIND SERVICE HERE.
ALL SERVICE TO THIS MANOR HAS PROVEN FUTILE... EVEN FATAL! AS IT SHALL TO US—AND THE PRINCESS—UNLESS WE HASTEN!
WE SHALL MEET YOU IN THE BARBICAN YARD...
If Waxwroth's Necromantic Preoccupation holds his Attention for just one hour more!
If our Intentions do not Disturb or Influence his Reactions—or his seem so much to affect ours!
If...
BAM!

...the Gatekeeper
It seems confused... as if in Pain.
BAM!
BAM
Perhaps it will take no Notice of me... or, at least, no Interest.

CRASH!

NO!
God damn this fortune! This Creature! This Mad Prince...
...whose Twisted Will drags us all to Hell! Unless I can--
R-I-I-I-I-P!

For once my size is to my advantage! If I cannot outrace the monster, surely I can outmaneuver it. At least I can lead it to some chamber from which only I can-
FLOODED! Oh, God...!
SPLASH!

NEXT:
FINAL PASSAGE

"Love!" cried the rotted branches.
"Love!" screamed the withered leaves, hanging in long-dead clusters from the branches.
"Love!" whispered the gnarled trunk, backbone that held the crying branches, that held the screaming leaves.
"Love!" pleaded the oak. A piteous call that pierced the witch's being like a blackened stake. And she felt compassion.
STORY
GENE
DAY
ART
DAN
DAY
WEEPING OAK

Story © 1984 by Gale Day Art © 1984 by Dan Day

"So sad is your song," said the witch, clinging to the oak's towering frame. "So sad that I am moved to use my powers. To cast a spell to make you a thing of flesh and bone and love... love a human can return."
She smiled like the golden sun and spun singing about the oak's base.
Spell, tree, and witch blended into a picture of beauty as magic, flickering like a living thing from her hands, struck the gnarled bulk of the aging oak.
Her song was a siren's call, her dance that of a lovely demon, as she spun fiery magic about the wooden creature.

Where once had stood the tree, now a man smiled, and laughed, and grasped the witch by her silken hands.
They danced spiritedly until so dizzy...
...they fell upon the moist earth, exhausted, yet aglow with warm life.
"Love me," whispered the man-oak.
She shoved suddenly away, and leapt catlike to her feet. "None may love a witch! So it has always been, so it will always be. None. Not even you."
"Death!" cried the man-oak, and struck her to the ground.

"Death!" screamed the man-oak, as hands still new crushed the softness of her throat.
And as the witch died, so died the man-oak.
Flesh returned to bark, bone returned to wood, and blood ran thin as sap.
"Love!" cried the weeping oak.. but none would ever hear.

"Death!" screamed the man-oak, as hands still new crushed the softness of her throat.
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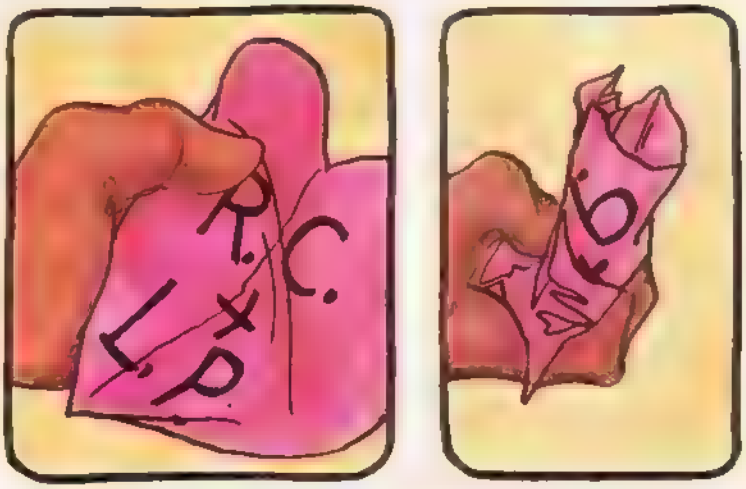
PREDATORS (Continued from page 22)

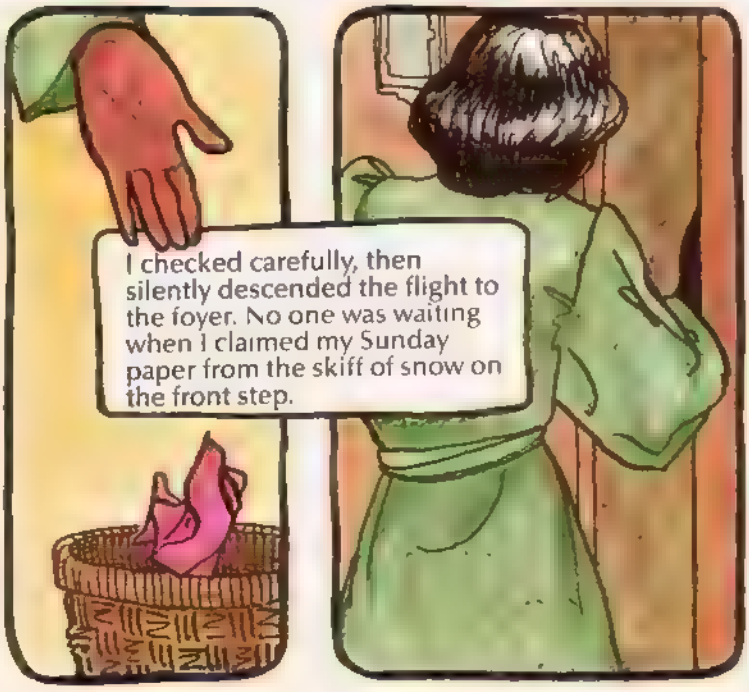
Listen, how's your laundry?
Beg your pardon?
Don't you do your laundry on the weekend?
Well, yes.
I'm gonna do a load sometime tonight. If I don't, no socks and underwear for Monday. If you want to come and do a load—
—I can make sure no freako jumps out and grabs you. We could talk. Don't you need to wash some clothes?
Thanks anyway. I've got to stay in tonight and work. I've got a lot to do.
I think you're lying.
I really do have—
LYING!

SO, WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME, BITCH?
Listen, I'm sorry.
These doors are old. Not stout at all. I could kick this one down in about two seconds. Just like the big bad wolf...
Please go away. I'll call the manager.
You think you're gold, don't you? You think it's gold.
Go. Please.
You know who I am, Lisa? I'm the bogey man. And I eat up little girls just like that.
So don't answer. I know you're there
You know who you are, Lisa? You're a puckered little prude. And you know what else you are?
I HEAR YOU! Don't try to sneak away. You're a real fruitcake. Right out of the sticks...Who else would wear gloves with a terrycloth robe. You—
He said things. Finally he left and I crept toward the couch and the teapot.
I poured a cup of cambric. The soothing milky scent filled the room.
What's wrong with him?

Later that evening, I heard Roger go out. He descended the back stairs, past my kitchen door. I kept still while I listened.
Something trailed his footsteps in a series of soft impacts. Almost against my will, I went to the kitchen window and looked down as the building's rear door swung open. Roger disappeared into the night, pulling a laundry bag after him.
He made me think of something large and dangerous, dragging its prey.
I went to bed feeling alone and lonely. I lay awake until I heard Roger come back from the laundry room.

Then I fell asleep and dreamed of traps. In the morning, I woke tense, shoulders sore and tight
I heard nothing from upstairs. Finally I got up, put on my robe, and went into the living room. I almost missed the paper heart that had been slipped under the front door.


R.C.
L.P.


I checked carefully, then silently descended the flight to the foyer. No one was waiting when I claimed my Sunday paper from the skiff of snow on the front step.

RING
Did you like the Valentine?
It's early, isn't it?
You're worth anticipating, Lisa.
I'm going to go now.
Don't you dare, Lisa. I've got to talk to you. I want to see you.
Goodbye.
Lisa, don't. I need—
Listen, Lisa, please don't hang up yet.
Okay.
Did you get what I left you? The heart? I know you must have found it. I'm really sorry about yesterday.
RING
RING
RING RING RING
Listen to me. Don't—
NEVER treat me like that.
—bother me again. Just go away
There was a long silence. Then it sounded like he was crying. I set the receiver down.
DON'T YOU EVER HANG UP ON ME AGAIN!
He didn't call back. Not right away. I scrubbed out the kitchen for most of the afternoon. By sundown, I'd started to relax. Roger didn't seem to be home.
When the phone rang, I let it go twenty times. Finally I picked it up. Silence. Soft breathing. Then the slow, deliberate click, and the dial tone.
All I could do was go back to comfortable routine. I swept all the floors. I wondered if Roger were in one of his singles bars picking up easier prey. Scrubbing the bathroom was next. It occurred to me that I was out of clean towels. In fact, I was out of *everything* clean.

RING
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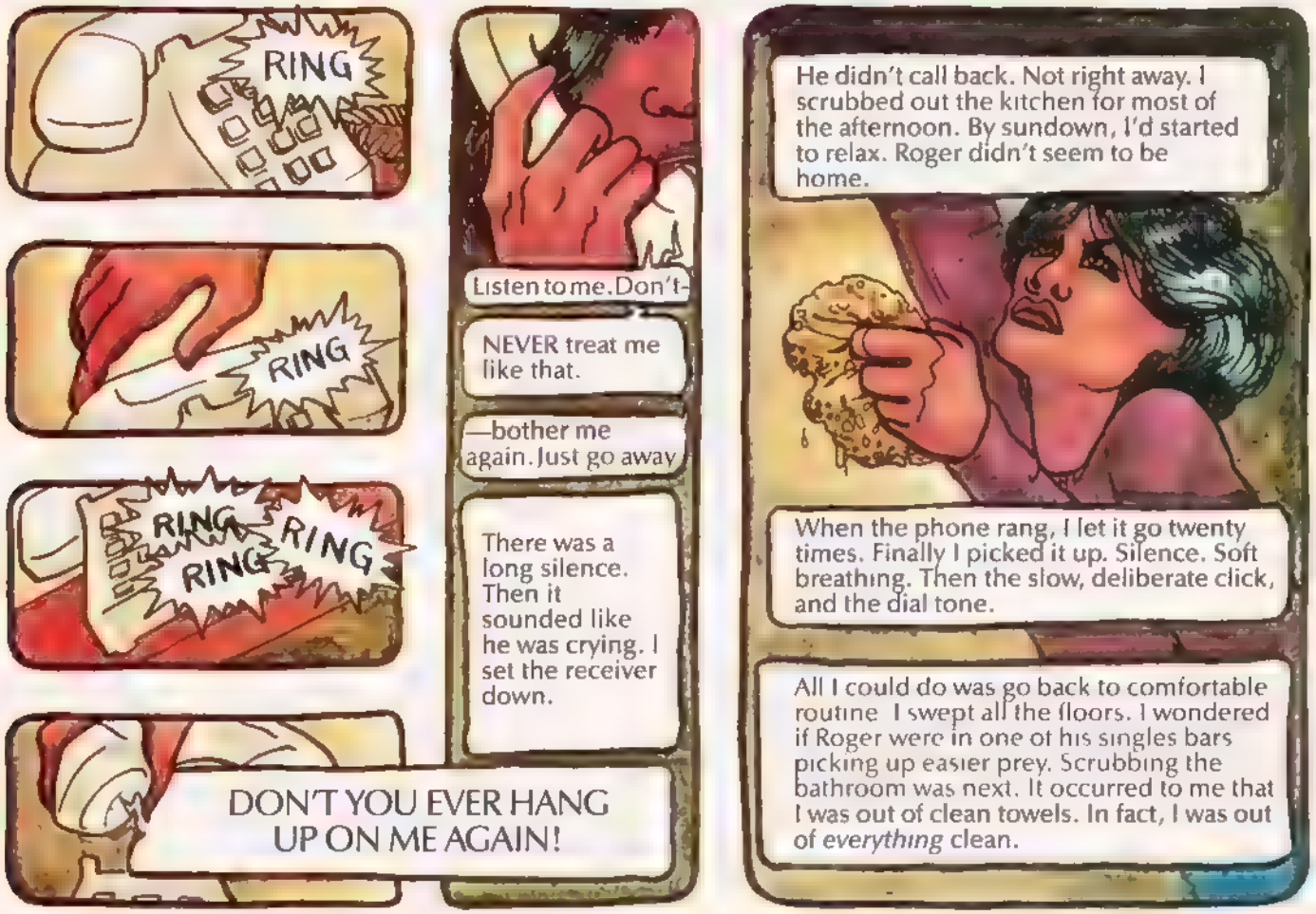
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I didn't have anything to wear in the morning.
It would do me no good to appear at job interviews in filthy jeans and sweatshirt. My one good wash-and-wear outfit needed laundering. No time in the morning—my first interview was at nine. I didn't relish the thought of visiting the laundry room tonight, but there seemed to be little choice.
I still heard nothing from Roger's apartment. Maybe he'd drunk too much and fallen in front of a truck.
Finally I stuffed everything I'd need into the basket and unlocked my rear door.

I felt rather than heard the door swing shut behind me. I didn't turn and look. There's nothing to fear in shadows.
The laundry room smelled musty. This was the sort of place where even clean clothes could get dirty just by being brought here. I'd loaded the washer and added the soap when I heard the outside door scrape open down at the end of the hall. There was no place I could go, so I set down the detergent and waited.
I heard footsteps echo.
Hi there, Lisa. I waited a long time for you. It's cold out tonight. I got lonely
What do you want?
To get to know you. I like hair that dark and sleek. I love green eyes. Too bad you don't have more on top, but no one can have everything.
You might want to take those clothes out of the washer and spread them on the floor. I think you'll be more comfortable.

I turned to face him.
I'm not going to do that.
Oh yeah? Why not? You can try running, but you won't even make it to the stairs.
I won't run. My family taught us to fight if we were cornered.
Well, I think your family is stupid.
All I wanted to do was live here peacefully...
...but you had to push.
You think I'm weird. Well I am, but I'm not like you.

After returning to my apartment and bathing myself, I slept away the night and all the next day. I got up depressed, knowing I'd missed my job appointments. How could I build a life in this place? I wanted my family.
I listened to the distant sirens, the drone of an airplane, a sharp noise that might have been either a backfire or a gunshot. Oh, mama...
The city disturbed me. I wished I felt safe.
Mountain News

IN STARSTRUCK

YOU'LL MEET:

- GALATIA 9
- BRUCILLA "THE MUSCLE"
- EROTICA ANN
- KALIF BAJAR
- VERLOONA
- THE GALACTIC GIRL GUIDES

AND

- E-V, THE ROBOT

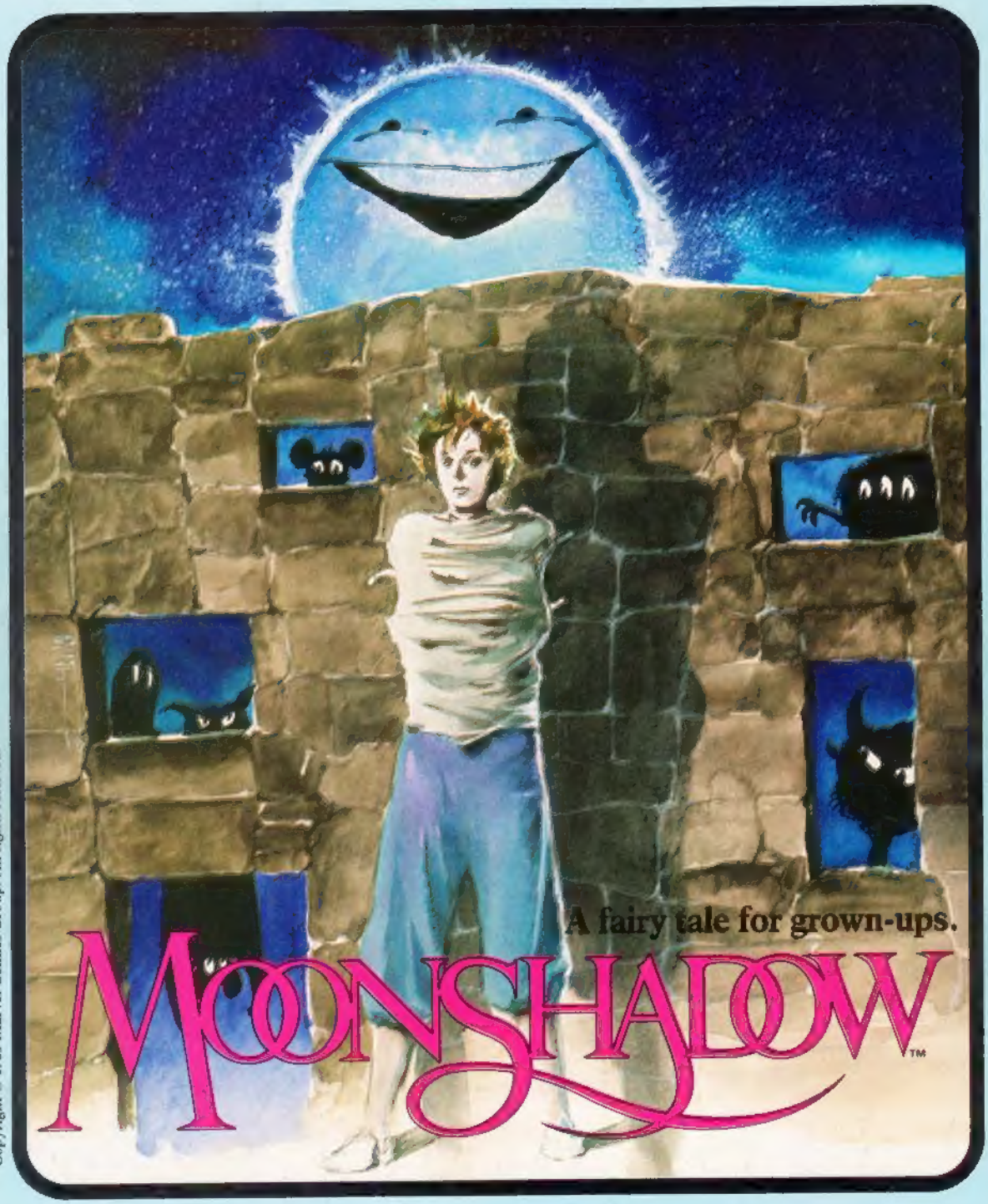
TO NAME JUST A FEW

IT'S NOT JUST A COMIC BOOK. IT'S AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

BY ELAINE LEE AND MICHAEL WM. KALUTA

EPIC COMICS
FROM MARVEL

WHY ARE THESE PEOPLE SMILING?



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Because they've been reading one of the most off-beat, sophisticated science-fantasy adventures ever!

Most people are crazy about it.

by J.M. DeMatteis & Jon J Muth
From Epic® Comics.